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*A Deleuzian Reading of Spatial  
Dependencies in the Poetry of Miłotałaj  
Sęp Szarzyński*

BY **IZABELA RUDZKA** (0608267r)

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
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Slavonic Studies Section

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Faculty of Arts

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

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## *Abstract*

In this study, I have selected two primary notions of the *fold* and *two floors* from Deleuze's work '*The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*' and have applied them to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century poet, Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński. My methodological approach allows me to present Sęp Szarzyński's poetry through the prism of various spatial relations and their mutual dependencies on many different levels. Space is crucial for the images which the poet employs in his works. In *Part I* I focus on the idea of movement presented by motifs of death and Fortune as well as rhetorical devices. In *Part II* I depict the image of the universe emerging from the analysed poems. In *Part III* I examine the topos of the labyrinth. In this respect Sęp Szarzyński's sense of space is extraordinary. In his poetic world he created an alienated, abstract, colourless space, offering multiple dependencies between phenomena, concepts and ideas. Everything in this world seems to be in a state of perpetual aporia, a dynamic impasse which offers no simple answers or solutions leaving much space for infinite folds. Even the poetic form and syntax reflect this unusual rendering of space. The poetic space of Sęp Szarzyński is filled with folds which appear between phenomena and links them in human existence.

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*'(...) Nie będę nazwan lekkim od żadnego,  
Bym stawiał piękność w tobie doświadczonej  
Każdemu cnoty. Jeno, żem uczonej  
Mało pił wody, nie śmiem się jąć tego.*

*Chęć przyjmij wdzięcznie; na tej Bóg przestaje.  
Lecz, jeśli Muzy z ubóstwem się zgodzą,  
Dzielność, stateczność, rozum, obyczaje  
Twoje, co zacność (choć wielką) przechodzą,*

*Wiersza mojego ustawną zabawą  
Będą. Co mówię? Będą sławą prawą.'*

*(Sonet VI)*

*Pracę tę dedykuję Doktorowi **Johnowi Bates'owi** i Doktor **Elwirze Grossman**. Niech będzie ona (niewielkim tylko) wyrazem wdzięczności za niezwykle pomoc (nie tylko merytoryczną), mądrość, wsparcie duchowe, cierpliwość i przyjaźń, których doświadczyłam od Państwa na wszystkich etapach powstawania tej pracy. Dla mnie będzie ona pamiątką naszej bardzo udanej, pięcioletniej współpracy i symbolem niezapomnianych chwil, które wiążą się z Glasgow, a także świadectwem umiejętności, jakich nabyłam podczas mojego pobytu tutaj i pracy z Państwem. Serdecznie dziękuję!*

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## *Declaration*

I declare that this thesis contains the results of my own work, that it has been composed by me and that it does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for a degree in this or any another University.

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## Introduction

Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński was a Polish poet of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (c. 1550 to c. 1581). The available information regarding his life and oeuvre is very limited. His poetic works circulated in manuscripts and most of them were lost or destroyed when his patron Stanisław Starzechowski died in 1582. Twenty years after Sęp Szarzyński's death, his brother Jakub collected all the poems that remained and published them in a volume called *Rytmy abo wiersze polskie* (1601, *Rhythms, or Verses in Polish*). The volume included sonnets, songs, paraphrases of Biblical Psalms, epitaphs and epigrams mostly written in Polish and occasionally in Latin. Only in 1826 was his poetry rediscovered in a private collection belonging to the Działyński family, in Kórnik near Poznań. In 1891 A. Brückner discovered anonymous love verses and several other poems in the Zamoyski collection which have been ascribed to Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński due to the fact that some of his poems known from the 1601 edition were found among them. However, scholars are not universally agreed about the authorship of these works, in particular the love poems which differ from Sęp Szarzyński's original published oeuvre. Tadeusz Sinko, for instance, refused to accept Brückner's thesis regarding their authorship and included only three poems *Fraszka* (*Niech się złe serce czuje*), *Statua Kupidynowa* and *Statua Fortuny* from the Zamoyski manuscript in his edition of *Rytmy* (1928)<sup>1</sup> while in the latest edition by Grześkowiak, Karpiński and Mrowcewicz (2001)<sup>2</sup>, all the love poems were included. English translations of *Rytmy* were provided by Richard Sokoloski in his study *The Poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński* (1990)<sup>3</sup>. Sokoloski clarifies that the Polish texts included in his work are based on the 1901 edition with modernised orthography. However, the translator does not indicate that *Statua Fortuny* and *Statua Kupidynowa* (found in the Zamoyski manuscript) have been added to his selection of texts despite their uncertain authorship. My research draws

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<sup>1</sup> Tadeusz Sinko, ed., *Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński: Rytmy oraz Anonimowe pieśni i listy miłosne z wieku XVI* (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1928).

<sup>2</sup> Radosław Grześkowiak, Adam Karpiński and Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, eds., 'Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński: Poezje zebrane,' (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN: Stowarzyszenie "Pro Cultura Litteraria", 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Sokoloski, *The Poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński (c. 1550-1581)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1990).

on Sokoloski's edition for a very practical reason: it offers English translations of most of the poems that are crucial for my analysis. Furthermore, this monograph offers the most complete study on Sęp Szarzyński in the English language as it includes up to date information about biographical details, cultural and historical contexts and various interpretations of the poems. Sokoloski opens his study with a portrayal of social, political and religious in sixteenth-century Poland. In *Part I*, he provides a brief summary of Sęp Szarzyński's life and continues with the problematic issues of his oeuvre focusing mostly on the authorship of the love poems. In *Part II*, Sokoloski analyses the poems through the prism of disharmony and their religious aspects. Finally, *Part III* includes the poems and their translation into English. It is significant that all attempts by English-speaking scholars (including Sokoloski) to present Sęp Szarzyński against the backdrop of European literature have resulted in unanimously allocating his poetry to the Baroque rather than to the Renaissance period, while Polish critics have never reached agreement on this matter.

Another study which contributes significantly to research on Sęp Szarzyński in Britain is an unpublished PhD thesis *Death and Suffering in the Poetry of John Donne and Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński* by Anna Grudzień<sup>4</sup>, submitted at the University of Oxford in 1999. Grudzień focuses on two motifs: death and suffering, simultaneously providing a broad historical background for her analysis. The thesis is innovative especially in terms of the comparison between the two poets. Grudzień's thesis was the first full-length work which compared Sęp Szarzyński to Donne. Only a few general references linking Donne with Sęp Szarzyński had appeared previously (Błoński<sup>5</sup>, Mrowcewicz<sup>6</sup> and Vincenz<sup>7</sup>). Grudzień sheds new light on the dispute as to whether Sęp Szarzyński's has closer affinity with Renaissance or Baroque aesthetics. She argues that 'in their pressing need to diminish suffering and to challenge death, Donne and Sęp Szarzyński were [...] men of their age. [...] Their common defiance should be seen as a reflection of their times

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<sup>4</sup> Anna Grudzień, 'Death and Suffering in the Poetry of John Donne and Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński,' diss., University of Oxford, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Błoński, *Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński a początki polskiego baroku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967) 148, 156.

<sup>6</sup> Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, ed., introduction, *Antologia polskiej poezji metafizycznej epoki baroku: od Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego do Stanisława Herakliusza Lubomirskiego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytut badań Literackich, 1993) 25.

<sup>7</sup> Andrzej Vincenz, 'Lektura sonetów I-V Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego: Prolegomena (głównie) językoznawcze,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 27, z. 1 (1979): 7-8.



as well as of their similar personalities'.<sup>8</sup> In 2003, Magdalena Kay likewise compared Sęp Szarzyński to Donne in *The Metaphysical Sonnets of John Donne and Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński: A Comparison*<sup>9</sup> but she does not acknowledge Grudzień's unpublished findings. Kay seeks to establish similarities between the poets arguing that a distinctive characteristic of both is the complexity of their poetry which defies periodisation. Furthermore, she enumerates several affinities between Sęp Szarzyński and Donne: the emotional yet abstract character of the poems, the frequent use of the sonnet as a genre and complex syntax. In her analysis of the poems she emphasises similar images of the past in the works of the English and the Polish poet, human duality (body and soul) and the rejection of transient matter. However, their main difference is that the human being is able to achieve purification in Donne's poetry while Sęp Szarzyński does not allow the possibility of salvation. Donne accepts his imperfect humanity, whereas Sęp Szarzyński cries out in despair against it.<sup>10</sup>

Alyssa Dinega Gillespie's study presents an interpretation of Sęp Szarzyński's *Sonet V*. She sees the sonnets, particularly *Sonet V* as a 'complex of dynamic, ever-shifting, ultimately unresolvable meanings unfolding through time in a kind of solitary dramatic performance'.<sup>11</sup> Her article opens with a brief review of the existing literature on Sęp. She emphasises that she is less interested in the periodical classification of his poetry than in its unique aesthetics. She argues that this poetry testifies to a conscious use of both Renaissance and Baroque characteristics but the poet's talent is demonstrated by the fact that '[h]is achievement cannot be encapsulated in any single, preformulated historical-psychological model'.<sup>12</sup>

Ann Komaromi offers an interesting interpretation of Sęp's poetry in 'The Aporia of Temporal Existence in Sęp Szarzyński's Poetry'<sup>13</sup> where she employs the Aristotelian term of 'aporia' for her methodological approach. Summarising previous

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<sup>8</sup> Grudzień 236.

<sup>9</sup> Magdalena Kay, 'The Metaphysical Sonnets of John Donne and Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński: A Comparison,' *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9.2 (2003), <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/09-2/kaysep.html>, 17. 03. 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Kay, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/09-2/kaysep.html>, 20. 03. 2011

<sup>11</sup> Alyssa Dinega Gillespie, 'Poem as Performance: A New Translation and Commentary to Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński's Sonnet V "On the Impermanent Love for Things of this World"', *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2003): 569.

<sup>12</sup> Gillespie 572.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Komaromi, 'The Aporia of Temporal Existence in Sęp Szarzyński's Poetry,' *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 43, no. 1 (1999): 122-136.

research she notes that Sęp Szarzyński has been conceived by scholars as a poet of static duality and difficulty which resulted in his poetry being split into opposing camps: metaphysical poetry and poetry celebrating earthly pleasures.<sup>14</sup> Komaromi unites them in one dynamic reality of the poetic world in the notion of aporia based on her reading of *Sonet I*, *Sonet V* and *Epitafium Rzymowi*. The impasse of human existence is characterised by paradoxes and oxymorons while motion and time are its points of departure. The aporia which appears between transcendental and earthly spheres as well as the inevitability of doubt are subjects of rational exploration and understanding. The aporia's tension proceeds from the acknowledgement that no human can comprehend a world beyond time, where good is eternal.<sup>15</sup> The challenge for a human being is to accept change, passing time and decay as permanent elements of existence. The awareness of instability, spiritual doubt and aporia allows Sęp Szarzyński to consciously and rationally struggle for faith.

George Gömöri's 'Baroque Elements in the Poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński and Balint Balassi'<sup>16</sup> compares the Pole and a Hungarian contemporary, Balassi. Gömöri's interpretation specifies the points of commonality between the two poets. He notes that although both lived in the late Renaissance period, they shared an interest in Baroque concerns, reflecting Baroque attitudes and ideas.

There are several other works which include references to the Polish poet. Czesław Miłosz in *The History of Polish Literature*<sup>17</sup> mentions Sęp Szarzyński as a practitioner of the sonnet form. Raymond Skyrle refers to Sęp Szarzyński, Quevedo, Du Bellay and Doublet as notable instances of variations on the *Romae ruinae* theme and continuations of Vitalis's epigram.<sup>18</sup> Santiago García-Castanon invokes Sęp Szarzyński's name in a similar context.<sup>19</sup> Polonists such as Claude Backvis<sup>20</sup>,

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<sup>14</sup> Komaromi 124.

<sup>15</sup> Komaromi 130.

<sup>16</sup> George Gömöri, 'Baroque Elements in the Poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński and Balint Balassi,' *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 46, no. 107 (1968): 383-396.

<sup>17</sup> Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983) 80.

<sup>18</sup> Raymond Skyrme, 'Quevedo, Du Bellay, and Janus Vitalis,' *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1982): 281-295.

<sup>19</sup> Santiago García-Castanon, 'The Ruins of Rome Revisited: Translating Vitalis, DuBellay, Szarzynski, and Quevedo,' *Translation Review*, no. 61 (2001): 20-25.

<sup>20</sup> Claude Backvis, "'Manieryzm", czyli barok u schyłku XVI wieku na przykładzie Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego,' in: *Szkice o kulturze staropolskiej*, ed. Andrzej Biernacki, trans. Elżbieta Radziwiłłowa (Warszawa: Państw. Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975).

Giovanni Maver<sup>21</sup> and Wiktor Weintraub<sup>22</sup> place his poetry within the larger context of the European literary tradition. There are also several works written on Sęp Szarzyński in French by Backvis<sup>23</sup> and Kupisz<sup>24</sup>, in German by Fleischer<sup>25</sup> as well as an article in Czech by Vlášek<sup>26</sup>.

Polish scholars have often regarded Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński as a poet of duality. This is partly due to the difficulty academics have in placing Sęp Szarzyński in a particular period. The epoch to which he belongs has been fiercely debated. Some scholars, such as Sokołowska,<sup>27</sup> search for similarities between Sęp Szarzyński and his contemporary, the greatest Polish Renaissance poet, Jan Kochanowski. Others, such as Błoński<sup>28</sup> or Mrowcewicz<sup>29</sup> classify his poetry as Mannerist or Baroque. Another area which has been of interest in Polish academic discourse, is whether Sęp Szarzyński converted to Catholicism<sup>30</sup> and the authorship of the erotic verses, which I mentioned above. The search for definitive answers to these questions has resulted in a rigid framework that divides Sęp Szarzyński's life as well as his poetry into binary oppositions instead of seeking common points between the contradictions. The groundbreaking study devoted to Sęp Szarzyński which challenged these dualistic interpretations was Jan Błoński's monograph *Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński a počátky polského baroku*.<sup>31</sup> Błoński was the first scholar to consider movement as a central theme of Sęp Szarzyński's poetry. This important point of departure allowed him to use movement as a broad framework for discussing the

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<sup>21</sup> Giovanni Maver, 'Rozważania nad poezją M. Sępa Szarzyńskiego,' *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 48, z. 1-2 (1957): 308-334. Original title: 'Considerazioni sulla Poesia di Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński,' *Recherche Slavistique*, vol. 3 (1954): 162-183.

<sup>22</sup> Wiktor Weintraub, 'Some Remarks on the Style of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński,' in: *Festschrift für Max Vasmer zum 70. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1956) 560-569.

<sup>23</sup> Claude Backvis, 'Maniérisme ou baroque à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le cas de Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński,' *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves*, vol. 17, no. 8 (1966): 149-220.

<sup>24</sup> Kazimierz Kupisz, 'Le Sonnet de la Renaissance en Pologne,' *Textes et Langages*, no. 14 (Nantes: Université de Nantes, 1987): 93-115. I was unable to access this article.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Fleischer, 'Frequenzlisten zur Lyrik von Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński, Jan Jurkowski und Szymon Szymonowicz und das Problem der statistischen Autorschaftsanalyse,' in: *Slavistische Beiträge* (München: O. Sagner, 1988). I was unable to access this article.

<sup>26</sup> Josef Vlášek, 'Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński a sonet,' *Slavia: Casopis pro Slovanskou Filologii*, vol. 58, no. 3 (1989): 247-257.

<sup>27</sup> Jadwiga Sokołowska, ed., introduction, *Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński: Rytmy abo wiersze polskie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1957) 5-24.

<sup>28</sup> Jan Błoński, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, *Czemu wolność mamy?: Antynomie wolności w poezji J. Kochanowskiego i M. Sępa Szarzyńskiego* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich - Wydawnictwo PAN, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> Anna Grudzień refers to this dispute in: *Death* 12-36.

<sup>31</sup> See: Błoński, op. cit.

poetry. Although his study focuses on the crucial motifs of Sęp Szarzyński's oeuvre, at times it lacks depth of scrutiny regarding particular images in the poems. One virtue of the book was to indicate the introverted character of many poems and the isolation of the lyrical subject in the universe. Both of these points are essential for my reading of Sęp Szarzyński.

It is noticeable that Błoński's interpretations are rooted in a biographical-historical methodology. Even though the scholar makes several remarks about the European influence on Sęp Szarzyński and emphasises that the poet was inspired by the Italian art and culture of his times, Błoński does not analyse Sęp Szarzyński's poems within this wider framework. Instead, he concentrates on placing the Polish poet in the context of Polish literature searching for similarities between Sęp Szarzyński's verses and poems by Kochanowski, Grabowiecki or Miaskowski which, in my opinion, is a major drawback of his study.

The methodology of this thesis is to present Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński's work in the broader European context. This approach allows me to look at this poetry through the prism of the literature and culture of the late Renaissance and the early Baroque and situate it within the common tendencies of art at this time. As Polish literary theory has mostly interpreted Sęp Szarzyński within the Polish context, my thesis, by using the notion of Deleuze's *fold* and *Baroque House*, casts a new light on previous research. Sęp Szarzyński, usually compared by Polish literary scholars to the great Polish Renaissance poet Jan Kochanowski, is considered as a forerunner of the Baroque period in Poland. If he is a forerunner, it is not in opposition to Kochanowski but due to his deep understanding of the changes that took place at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, which I try to demonstrate in this thesis. The *fold* that is a metaphor of space and spatial relations between images in Sęp Szarzyński's verses is my tool for presenting the contradictory yet unifying nature of this poetry. It also reveals Sęp Szarzyński's ability to translate the surrounding world into notions, abstractions and spatial dependencies. I chose the category of space in order to examine different levels of the poems: the representations of the outer and inner world of the lyrical subject as well as the language and the poetic devices within the poetic structure. Błoński's study has already established that the idea of movement dominates Sęp Szarzyński's oeuvre. I develop these findings by using a different

methodology (the notion of the *fold*) and discuss specific motifs which are employed to emphasise movement within the poetic texts and their structures.

By using the theoretical ideas of Głowiński, Santarcangeli and Kenosian, I explore the topos of labyrinth which plays a crucial role in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry, and which does not appear in previous literature analysing the Polish poet. Sęp Szarzyński constructed images in his works on the basis of space and space-linked categories. His profound sense of space perfectly reflects the spirit of the time. Partly because of his talent and partly thanks to his friends and the journeys he took to Leipzig, Wittenberg and possibly Italy, he became deeply aware of the new trends and movements of his times. His poetry consciously develops out of the literary tendencies which originated from social instability, religious conflicts, growing individualism and alienation, general despondency, as well as increasing doubts in the human senses, and reflects the spirit of the age in a highly individual manner. If I call Sęp Szarzyński a Baroque poet (although I try to avoid any contrived frameworks and notions) it is not because he is different from Kochanowski. On the contrary, he can be considered a Baroque poet because he is comparable to other great European Baroque poets such as Donne or Gongora and he is fully aware that the Renaissance harmony in the world and hence in art is evaporating and making way for a new poetic aesthetics.

*Part I* of my thesis examines the notion of the *fold* and interprets it in the field of the arts. Its subchapters focus on the spatial categories which derive from it: movement which causes a multiplicity and two key poetic images, those of Fortune and death. I argue that these important motifs in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry are the tools which cause movement in human life and hence in Sęp Szarzyński's poetic world. Moreover, movement within the poetic structure creates folds that open up a multiple series of possibilities and variety of interpretations.

*Part II* presents space folded on two levels according to Deleuze's concept of the two floors. I intend to draw a picture of the universe that emerges from Sęp Szarzyński's work. His universe is strongly accentuated by a horizontal line; what is below is sinful, while reality above graduates from the less to the more perfect and eventually reaches its purest form in God. This chapter provides an example of how Sęp Szarzyński views space within the universe and how it determines the human place there. A parallel division takes place in the human interior: the body belongs to

the earth while the soul has a divine component. Thus the human being consists of a mortal and immortal part, the lower and upper floor.

Finally, in *Part III* I examine the motif of the labyrinth and the metaphysical meaning of this topos in art. This motif reflects the relationship between space and time, between physical matter and its metaphorical sense. In the following chapters, I describe the labyrinthine images in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry which are visible on many different levels. The labyrinth is an essential element of Sęp Szarzyński's poetic world which reveals a complex unity of duality, an attempt to search for the ultimate answers in a confused reality and within the human being. I also analyse how the poetic structure reflects the idea of the labyrinth.

I summarize my research concluding that the category of space and images linked to it are visible in both the poetic imagination and style of Sęp Szarzyński's poetry. The notion of the *fold* helps me to extract these motifs in order to reveal how the contradictions coexist in works of the Polish poet and how this poetry fits into the general literary and artistic currents of the era.

## Part I

### *The Folds of Human Life*

#### *1.1 What is the fold?*

The notion of *the fold* was introduced by Gilles Deleuze in his study *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*<sup>32</sup> where the ideas of the German philosopher become the basis for presenting the essential Baroque concepts in the field of the arts. The fold, according to Deleuze is the common motif for Baroque architects, painters, musicians, poets and philosophers. The folds are seen in the pleats of fabric, curves of rocks, clouds or waters. It affects all materials because it determines and materializes Form.<sup>33</sup>

The notion of the fold is synonymous with multiplicity. Multiplicity means that there are no binary categories in a mental space'.<sup>34</sup> 'Everything moves as if the pleats of matter possessed no reason in themselves. It is because the fold is always between two folds, and because the between-two-folds seems to move about everywhere (...)' Deleuze says.<sup>35</sup> He interprets the world as a body of infinite folds and surfaces that twist and weave through compressed time and space. Deleuze presents contemporary views of events and history as multifaceted combinations of signs in motion always in the process of becoming. The world is an infinite series of inflections: there are folds of space, movement, and time which proceed into infinity.

According to this perspective 'the world is the infinite curve that touches at an infinity of points, an infinity of curves, the curve with a unique variable, the convergent series of all series'.<sup>36</sup> The fold is a process of becoming, of multiplicity,

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<sup>32</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: Athlone, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze 13.

<sup>34</sup> See: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1991).

<sup>35</sup> Deleuze 34.

<sup>36</sup> Deleuze 24.

of differentiation while maintaining continuity. Spatiality is seen as a becoming with no external measures or ends, with no boundaries.

Such folds are visible in paintings by El Greco, such as *Christ in the Mount of Olives*, *The Baptism of Christ* or *Entombment of the Count of Orgaz*. Another Baroque painter whose works are organised along the fold, is Tintoretto. In *The Last Judgement* the canvas is divided in two by a horizontal line. On the bottom bodies are pressed leaning against each other, tormented by their own weight, while folds of fire bring their bodies alive and above a soul rises.

Deleuze explains that the immanent part of every fold or curve is inflection. He claims that the elastic, spontaneous line is what 'testifies to [Paul Klee's] affinity to the Baroque' while the opposite is Kandinsky, 'for whom angles are firm, set in motion by an exterior force'.<sup>37</sup> The exemplar of poetic folds, according to Deleuze is Mallarmé's *Herodiade* which he calls 'the poem of the fold'.<sup>38</sup> Deleuze claims that the use of folds as an 'operatory act' makes this 19<sup>th</sup>-century writer actually a Baroque poet.<sup>39</sup> However, Deleuze does not explain precisely how the folds can be found inside the poetic text and how they exist as a part of a poetic imagination.

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<sup>37</sup> Deleuze 14.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze 30.

<sup>39</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Jonathan Strauss, 'The Fold,' trans. Jonathan Strauss *Yale French Studies*, no. 80 (1991): 236

*'Magical shadow with symbolic powers!  
A voice from the distant past, an evocation,  
Is it not mine prepared for incantation?  
In the yellow folds of thought, still unexhumed,  
Lingering, and like an antique cloth perfumed,  
Spread on a pile of monstrosities grown cold,  
Through ancient hollows and through stiffened folds  
Pierced in the rhythm of the pure lace shroud  
Through which the old veiled brightness is allowed  
To mount, in desperation, shall arise  
(But oh, the distance hidden in those cries!)*  
*The old veiled brightness of a strange gilt-silver,  
Of the languishing voice, estranged and unfamiliar:  
Will it scatter its gold in an ultimate splendor,  
And, in the hour of its agony, render  
Itself as the anthem for psalms of petition  
For all are alike in being brought to perdition  
By the power of old silence and deepening gloom,  
Fated, monotonous, vanquished, undone,  
Like the sluggish waters of an ancient pond(...)*  
*(...)Help me to comb these plaits you dare not see,  
Languid before a mirror listlessly.'*

[http://faculty.ncf.edu/hassold/FinDeSiecle/mallarme\\_herodiade.htm](http://faculty.ncf.edu/hassold/FinDeSiecle/mallarme_herodiade.htm), 14. 03. 2010



I intend to use Gilles Deleuze's notion of the fold as an interpretive tool. The images used in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry seem to be contradictory. In fact his poetry is full of oppositions and it is important to determine *how* they coexist, how the poet connects the contradictions and why they are used. How can we interpret this poetry if we put these contradictions together? Is there any reason why the poet divides his poetic world into binary categories? What can readers perceive between these oppositions? Does their interpretation become grey if they find a link between the black and white?

The aim of my thesis is a closer examination of the poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński in order to establish the folds on multiple literary levels. The first chapter will focus on movement behind the creation of folds. Since movement causes these folds in human life, death and change (identified with Fortune) exemplify it in the most evident way. The second chapter illustrates the consequences of existing folds: the distinction into two worlds, one characterized by movement and change and the second synonymous with stillness and eternal endurance. It runs parallel to the division into two floors within Deluzian *Baroque House*. The last part examines the most complex example of the *fold*, a labyrinth which becomes a metaphor of different inflections within the human soul.

To my knowledge, there have been no attempts in existing English language scholarship to apply the the notion of the *fold* to interpret poetry. Its primary exception are samples offered by Deleuze himself. In the subject of philosophy he mentions the forthcoming Andre Scala's *Genese du pli chez Heidegger* where the author examines the genesis of the *fold* in Heidegger's works, however I was unable to locate this text. Even in Polish academic literature on the poet there is no interpretation of Sęp Szarzyński's poetry involving the theoretical framework of Deleuze's philosophy. I will apply this methodology in order to present the Polish poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński in the light of a cosmopolitan theoretical context.

## 1.2 *The Creator of Folds - the Movement*

Motion and change became crucial symptoms of the tension which appeared on the cusp of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. The idea of movement became an existential principle for contemporary individuals. It played an important role in every sphere of life and science: biology, medicine, politics, physics and art. Changes which took place within society broader corresponded to inner changes which had been seen as a link between the macrocosm and microcosm. The macrocosm with its whirling planets corresponded to movement inside the human being originating in the beating heart. The recently discovered circulatory system intensified people's convictions regarding the life-giving role of movement.<sup>40</sup> Céspedes y Meneses wrote: 'Just as the heavens are in continuous movement, it seems that the lower things follow them, circling together with them, for we see that they never remain in the same state of being'<sup>41</sup>. But the movement identified with life, at the same time had its opposite meaning. What lives, simultaneously changes and passes away. Thus, change (Fortune) and death are the ultimate results of movement on earth. Movement and mutability are universal. They permeated from the social life and condition of existence to visual arts and literature and became frequently used motifs in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as manifestations of declining Renaissance harmony and stability. 'Mobility, change and inconstancy predominated over other themes: all things are mobile and transitory; everything escapes and changes; everything moves, rises or declines, is transferred, gets whirled around'<sup>42</sup>. The motifs of movement and change were common in the works of metaphysical writers such as John Donne (for instance *Sonnet I*), George Herbert (*The Storm*), Andreas Gryphius (*Tears of the Fatherland*) or Daniel Naborowski (*Krótkość żywota*). Spenser's *Mutability Cantos* offers yet another example. In painting, the artists creating dynamic images on their canvases included Rubens or Velazquez; the latter, according to Maravall, 'is the one who accomplishes with unrivaled success the supreme effort of painting movement itself'. He 'tried to take to the painting

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<sup>40</sup> José Antonio Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, trans. Terry Cochran, in: *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 25 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986) 173.

<sup>41</sup> Céspedes y Meneses quoted after Maravall 176.

<sup>42</sup> Maravall 180.

movement as such, movement directly in action'.<sup>43</sup> The spinning wheel visible in *Las Hilanderas* (*The Spinners* or *The Fable of Arachne*) is one of these images of movement.

Heinrich Wölfflin considered the idea of movement in paintings as one of the distinctive characteristics of painterly style which was typical for the Baroque (in opposition to linear style, typical of Renaissance). In his major work entitled *Renaissance and Baroque* he states: 'The painterly style thinks only in masses, and its elements are light and shade. Light and shade contain by nature a very strong element of movement (...) A mass of light has no bounds, no definite break in continuity so it evokes the illusion of constant change and infinity. Corresponding to this distinction between linear and massive is another, that between "flat" and "spatial". The painterly style gives objects the illusion that they reject or recede in space. The aim of the painterly style is to create an illusion of movement'.<sup>44</sup>

Movement produces creases and folds which lead to multiplicity. 'Multiplicity and variety of inflections produce 'events', or vibrations 'with an infinity of harmonics or submultiples'.<sup>45</sup> What is multiple, is folded in many ways. It means that the boundaries of matter are not sharp and divided into separate objects but they are connected, shaped by the pleats and light. What is shaded does not disappear but makes the other part lit and dominant. The movement offers the possibility of change and various versions of the same matter. One of the factors produced by movement is variety. 'Uniformity limits, variety expands' said Gracian.<sup>46</sup> Movement connects oppositions and fills the space between them. It divides the fold into further folds and becomes a cause of the folds it produces. Movement allows things to pass from one to another. 'Everything moves as if the pleats of matter possessed no reason in themselves'.<sup>47</sup> As matter is a main component of earth and a human being's body it determines existence. Thus, movement shapes it and creates the folds of matter. The individual can benefit from all that matter - animated by movement - possesses and offers, but at the same time, human mortality is part of the motion which make the planets spin and time pass.

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<sup>43</sup> Maravall 177.

<sup>44</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque* (London: Collins, 1964 (1984 [printing]) 38.

<sup>45</sup> Tom Conley, foreword 'A Plea to Leibniz,' *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, by Gilles Deleuze (London: Athlone, 1993) XIV.

<sup>46</sup> Maravall 183.

<sup>47</sup> Deleuze 13.

Mutability, inconstancy, frailty and death as a result of the passing of life are the folds produced by movement.

### 1.3 The Key Images of Movement

#### a) The Image of Death

Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński was described by Jan Błoński as a poet of movement<sup>48</sup>. The world presented in his poetry seems to be in perpetual motion, its fundamental principle being change. The reality of human life is dynamic – it is a space where different forces are in conflict. The human individual's inner world is also a battlefield. Humans cannot remain motionless, their world is constantly shifting and being thrown off balance. Everything around them is changeable, and this includes their soul which is exposed to the activity of the forces that cause its fall. Movement within the human sphere creates folds which determine existence. The essential condition of humankind is described in the following line:

‘Miłość jest własny bieg bycia naszego,  
Ale z żywiołów utworzone ciało(...)’<sup>49</sup>  
(Sonet V)

‘Love’s surely our being’s just course,  
Aye, but ’tis flesh, from matter wrought (...)’

The alliteration ‘**bieg bycia**’ (*course of being*) connects the words ‘to be’ and ‘to course’. Thus, the course is an immanent part of human existence. Sęp Szarzyński thereby presents life as a journey (the topos of *peregrinatio vitae*) and the human being as a pilgrim or a sailor who is led to some uncertain end.

The love mentioned in this poem is mystical, it is *circuitus spiritualis* – a movement which filters through the whole universe. It contains three phases: beauty, love and bliss. The movement from God to the world is synonymous with beauty, its penetration into the sphere of the human – synonymous with love, returning to God – is associated with bliss<sup>50</sup>. The course towards God is always delayed by ‘niestałe dobra’ (*unstable goods*) which are perfectly symbolized by

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<sup>48</sup> Błoński 3.

<sup>49</sup> The poetic texts and their translations are quoted after: Sokolowski, op. cit. I use Polish titles according to the following pattern throughout this study: ‘Sonet + no’ for sonnets, ‘Pieśń + no’ for songs ‘Pieśń + no Pr’ for paraphrases of Psalms. I provide the title translations only when they do not reflect this pattern or differ from Polish.

<sup>50</sup> Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, *Czemu* 217.

Atalanta's apples.<sup>51</sup> All earthly pleasures impede the soul's course towards God. Life is simultaneously an escape from temptation by earthly goods and the course towards death:

'O moc, o rozkosz, o skarby pilności,  
Choćby nie darmo były, przedsie szkodzą,  
Bo naszą chciwość od swej szczęśliwości  
własnej, co Bogiem zowiemy, odwodzą.'  
(Sonet I)

*'Power, delights, wealth, such ado,  
Tho ne'er for naught, 'tis ill they work,  
For our desire they turn astray  
From its rightful bliss (God we name).'*

'Ten nasz dom-ciało, dla zbiegłych lubości  
Niebacznie zajrzając duchowi zwierzchności,  
Upaść na wieki żądać nie przestanie.'  
(Sonet IV)

*'The flesh, our abode, for joys fleet,  
Eying heedless the spirit's lead,  
Stems not its wish for endless ruin.'*

When human beings fall in love with earthly goods they die like Narcissus. To cease moving in the whirling world reduces them to the fate of Narcissus. The world is tempting, but all the apples thrown underfoot will impede the human course to its ultimate purpose.

This run (motion) is in two directions – one towards heaven and one which is an escape from death which 'spore za nami czyni kroki' (*makes great strides behind us*). The escape is part of the human condition – paradoxically fleeing death brings it closer to human beings. The natural consequence of movement is change, the result of change is passing, the end of the earthly journey is death. Death comes unexpectedly and suddenly cuts off human life. The example of human's run towards death is exemplified in John Donne's *Sonnet I*:

'(...) I run to death, and Death meets me as fast,  
And all my pleasures are like yesterday (...)'<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See: Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, 'Atalanta i Narcyz. Udręka ruchu i pragnienie trwania,' *Szybko i szybciej: Eseje o pośpiechu w kulturze*, ed. Dorota Siwicka, Marek Bieńczyk and Aleksander Nawarecki (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 1996) 61-76.

<sup>52</sup> John Donne, *Holy Sonnets: Sonnet I*, <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/holysonnet1.php>, 01. 06. 2010.

A similar image of life in its motion is employed by the Spanish poet, Luis de Góngora in his sonnet *De la brevedad engañosa de la vida* (*Concerning the deceptive brevity of life*):

‘Less swiftly did the arrow seek  
its destined mark, which it so sharply pierced;  
the racing chariot on voiceless sand  
did not a column with more silence round,

than swiftly runs, and surreptitiously  
to its end our life (...)

You will not soon be pardoned by the hours:  
hours that erode the fabric of our days,  
days that our years inevitably gnaw.’<sup>53</sup>

In this verse, life is compared to a swift arrow and a racing chariot. Words such as: ‘swiftly’ repeated twice, ‘sharply’, ‘pierced’, ‘racing’ and ‘runs’ emphasize the movement of this poetic text. Hours turn into days and days turn into years leading the ‘run’ of human life to its end.

In Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry only what is still can be eternal. What is in motion, decays. Hence, movement is a cause of mankind’s mortality. On earth, not only life is in motion, but also death as part of linear time cannot remain passive. Death is already in motion (‘się toczy’) and strikes (‘bije’). If humans stop like Narcissus to look at their reflection, death is ‘ready to contaminate the world’ (‘świat skazić gotowa’). The image of death in motion is affiliated with the medieval *dance macabre* and is presented by a dynamic description:

‘Córa to grzechowa  
Świat skazić gotowa:  
Wszytko, co się rodzi,  
Bądź po ziemi chodzi,  
Lub w morskiej wnętrzości  
I wietrznej próżności,  
Jako kosarz ziele  
Ostrą kosą ściele,  
Tak ta wszystko składa;  
Ani opowiada  
Nikomu swojego  
Zamachu straszego.  
I wy, co to ćiecie,  
Prawda, że nie wiecie,

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<sup>53</sup> Luis de Góngora, *Concerning the deceptive brevity of life*, trans. Alix Ingber, 1995, <http://sonnets.spanish.sbc.edu/>, 30. 03. 2011.

Jeśli nie przymierza  
Ta sroga szampierza  
Któremu do szyje.  
Strzeż się: oto bije!  
(*Napis na statuetkę albo na obraz śmierci*)

*'She be sin's child,  
All would she smite:  
Whatever's born,  
Tho sod it tred,  
A sea's depths,  
Or airy voids;  
As with honed scythe  
A reaper cleaves,  
All she taketh,  
Foretelling none  
The dreaded stroke!  
You there, reading,  
Nay, you know not  
If this grim foe  
Her sight toward  
A neck now brings...  
Be fast! She swings!'*  
(*Inscription for a Statue [or an Image of Death]*)

In Polish grammar the noun 'death' is feminine in gender and that is why Sęp Szarzyński uses the word 'córa' (*a daughter*). He calls death a 'child of sin'. Death is a 'daughter to sin' so the original sin causes death as well as movement, which makes the world turn and pushes human beings towards death. Mortality is a source of movement which becomes a part of human existence.

According to Polish tradition, death has normally been presented as a woman's skeleton with a scythe (for example, in the anonymous medieval poem *Rozmowa mistrza Polikarpa ze Śmiercią*)<sup>54</sup> but a similar image of death is presented

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<sup>54</sup> *Conversation of Master with Death*, trans. Michał J. Mikoś,  
[http://staropolska.pl/ang/middleages/sec\\_poetry/conversation.php3](http://staropolska.pl/ang/middleages/sec_poetry/conversation.php3), 07. 10. 2011.  
'(...) *He saw a naked being  
Of the female gender,  
With an awfully ugly appearance,  
Wrapped up in a piece of cloth,  
Skinny, pale, with a yellow face  
Shining like a wash bowl; (...)  
No lips in her muzzle,  
She gnashed her teeth yawning;  
She cast her eyes around and turned,  
With threatening scythe in her hand;  
Bare-headed, stridently talking,  
A hideous figure all around –  
She stuck out her ribs and bones,  
And slashed ominously without pity (...)*'



by Bernard Salomon in *The Old Man and Death* (1547) – one of the illustrations for Aesop's fables or in *In Ictu Oculi* (1672) by Juan de Valdes Leal (however in the latter death is genderless). Personifications of death, of no particular gender, can also be found in many European 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-century works such as Holbein's (the Younger) *Dance of Death* series (1523–26) which had many other interpreters or in an engraving (print) *Fleuch wa du willst, Des todtes bild, Staetz auff dich Zielt* made by Gerhard Altzenbach circa 1650 where death is ready to fire with a bow and an hour-glass is placed just behind it. In *The Three Ages of Woman and Death* painted by Hans Balgung Grien (1509-1510) death holds an hour-glass. In the works of Jacopo Ligozzi, an Italian painter of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, death possesses different attributes, for instance an hour-glass or a net. The personification of death is a frequent motif in poetry, for example in George Herbert's *A Dialogue-Anthem*.

In Sęp Szarzyński's poem *Napis na statuetę*, death's movement is emphasised by the poem's organisation, where the static description of death changes to a dynamic dialogue between the lyrical voice and the reader. The speed of death which follows human beings ('toczy się') is so great that it catches them before they are able to turn around. But people will not recognise death unless they see it themselves. Sęp Szarzyński starts with a description of death's power, of its universality and unlimited nature on earth ('wszystko co się rodzi' – *whatever's born*) whether it is a creature of soil, water or air, but the last verse is addressed directly to the reader who can therefore become the potential object of death's action. Paul Binski states that 'death, like birth is [...] universal, but the state of death can only be represented or written about from the perspective of the cultural expectations of the living'.<sup>55</sup> The personification and the apostrophe to the reader make this poem a mirror which identifies death and the individual. Binski continues: 'Mirrors [...] introduce the idea of temporality, the passage of time. The subject encounters in the mirror its future state, something which is in the process of becoming: death is already implicit in life, and the mirror lures us into self-understanding through auto-surveillance'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the sudden warning 'Strzeż się: oto bije!' (*Be fast! She swings!*) becomes the future state of the subject identified with the spectator, the reader. In this poem, the addressee can immediately see himself or

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<sup>55</sup> Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996) 164.

<sup>56</sup> Binski 160.

herself as a subject of mortality, of death's blows. E. Dubruck gives a similar example of death's suddenness from Thibault de Marly:

‘Ja ne gardons nos l'ore que la mors nos ocie;  
Et por ce tieng la mort a mortal enemie  
Qu'el n'espargne nului por amender sa vie.’<sup>57</sup>

Death is shown here as the human being's enemy because it comes unexpectedly and does not allow man to better himself.<sup>58</sup>

The image of death as a labourer scything grass is similar to a metaphor in Jan Kochanowski's *Tren V* where the dead girl is presented as a young branch of an olive tree cut off by a careless gardener. Dubruck maintains that human's life comparison to the transitoriness (ephemeral nature) of a flower is a technique drawn from the classical and biblical legacy which was used in numerous Renaissance sonnets.<sup>59</sup> Death, which is ‘niebaczna’ (*careless*), ‘nielutościwa’ (*merciless*), ‘łakoma’ (*greedy*) i ‘skwapliwa’ (*overzealous*), the result of ultimate sin, is mankind's ultimate destiny. Unpredictable, chaotic, blind, striking people down with its scythe, it is the element which destroys the order of the universe. It is the ravisher of nature's laws, especially when it scythes down the ‘blossom of rare fragrance’ (‘kwiateczek wonią znamienity’). It takes people by surprise (działa ‘gwałtem’), without forewarning anyone of its terrifying assault (‘nie opowiadając nikomu swojego zamachu strasznego’); it represents not only the end of life but becomes also its permanent element.

But simultaneously death allows people to move from one world into another. It is a movement which connects a changeable and vulnerable life with stillness and eternity. Death in motion is a fold between the folds of earthly and eternal lives. When Sęp Szarzyński writes ‘be aware: she strikes’, is it a warning about death or its unpredictable action? It is both, but mostly, the speed of death frightens the lyrical subject. In the end, only death allows humans to become frozen in time (‘przecina witkę’) and enjoy the endless spring, which is a state of suspended

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<sup>57</sup> My translation: ‘*I do not try to know when death arrives;*

*Death is a mortal enemy*

*which saves nobody and brings relief in life.*’

<sup>58</sup> Edelgard Dubruck, *The Theme of Death in French Poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964) 54.

<sup>59</sup> Dubruck 116.

motion. Death is not the result of God's action, but of mankind's. That is why the fragment of *Napis wtóry* has given rise to certain interpretative doubts:

‘(...) równą matce dał mi Bóg macochę,  
A snadźci, by był tenże chciał wieków przedłużyć (...)’  
(*Pannie Zofije Kostczance...Napis Wtóry*)

‘(...) and God (...) gave me a stepmother mother's peer.  
Had He wished, perchance, to make more her years (...)’  
(*For Miss Sophia Kostczanka...Second Inscription*)

As mentioned above, death is motion removed from natural harmony, opposed to the movement of natural law, where everything revolves like an ever-changing carousel, moved by God himself. Why then does the pronoun ‘tenże’ refers to God, as if death is his will rather than the result of the chaos which is a human attribute? Perhaps death is not only an accident (‘trafunkiem’), but also a deserved punishment for sins and God does not always want to prolong the ages (‘wieków przedłużyć’).

Yet another Epitaph deserves closer scrutiny:

‘Tu on najpiękniejszy kwiat panieńskiej młodości,  
Któremu i Helena, i sama w piękności  
Wenus równa nie była, leży pochowany,  
Nogą nielutościwej śmierci podeptany.  
Pytasz, przecz tak nadobny kwiateczek ku wiosnie,  
Gdy drugie kwiatki rosną, znowu nie wyrośnie?  
Płomienie febry ciężkiej, które go paliły,  
Te mu tę smutną łakę gwałtem zasuszyły.  
I aż ogniem zrządzonym ten grób pokropiony  
Będzie, tuż on (dziwna rzecz) wznidzie odrodzony.  
Upuść na tę mogiłę którą kropię z oczy:  
Niech go ziemia odwilży, nie tak twardo tłoczy.’  
(*Nagrobek jednej pannie*)

‘That flower most fair of maiden youth,  
Whose fairness not Helen, not Venus did  
Rival, 'tis here she lies interred,  
Crushed under foot by death unfeeling.  
You ask why so pleasing a posy shall not  
Again bloom toward spring when others blossom forth?  
A harsh fever's flames worked to consume it,  
Its saddened grassy sod they've fast parched.  
But if by fire from above this grave be watered,  
Yet again (what wonder!) might it rise up reborn.  
From thine eyes let a drop fall on this mound,  
May the soil moisten her, and press not so hard.  
(*Epitaph to a Young Lady*)

The human being is again presented as a flower which dies under death's foot. In this poem death also possesses dynamic characteristics, which are emphasised by the words 'podeptany' (*trodden underfoot*) and 'gwałtem' (literally: *violently*) connected with movement and violence and the epithet 'nielutościwej' (*pitiless*). Death is chasing behind human beings and remains in motion for the duration of their lives. At the moment of confrontation, it is also dynamic – destroying humans whilst itself in motion. The word 'podeptany' indicates not only the motion of death, but also situates human beings in a particular hierarchy in respect of it. This word has a deprecatory connotation, it is an image of death's control over living creatures.

The symbol of fire used in this poem plays a significant role in the poetic imagery, being it is also dynamic. In Sęp Szarzyński's lyrics the elements (especially fire and water) are wild and harsh and beyond human control. They bring about change, and are synonymous with movement towards God's flame which – as Sęp Szarzyński puts it oxymoronically – 'grób jest pokropiony' (in the original Polish version: *showered with the fire ordained by God*). The flame sent by God is a saving grace which helps to cross the transcendental line. This fire does not burn, but illuminates, cleanses, brings relief. The first is connected with the force signalling man's fall, or else it indicates the hell after death, then at least hell on earth. The other leads towards the source of light up above.

The binary image of fire reflects the idea of multiplicity in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry. Fire in this poem belongs to two different worlds – the human, material and the divine, transcendent – which it connects, becoming a fold. Human life includes them both. The individual belongs somewhere in between, he/she is buried by the earthly fire of profane love and purified by God's flame<sup>60</sup>.

D. Śnieżko writes in connection with Sęp Szarzyński's poetry that 'śmierć nie jest ukojeniem, nie jest wyzwoleniem' (*Death does not bring relief and liberation*).<sup>61</sup> We may say rather, that the contrary holds true on condition that life is lived virtuously – a relationship that all the epitaphs emphasise. The path to heaven is known only by those who have deserved it by leading upright lives. Why, then, do people flee from death if it can help them to reach God sooner? Sęp Szarzyński claims in *Sonet I* that with each day that passes, the shadow cast by sin

<sup>60</sup> Compare with John Donne's *Holy Sonnets: Sonnet V*.

<sup>61</sup> Dariusz Śnieżko, *Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński* (Poznań: Rebis, 1996) 116.

grows longer, hence death would be a release from worldly desires. Orphism - ancient Greek religious philosophy - maintained that life was a penalty for the soul sent down into the prison of the body because of some past misdeeds. Death was only a welcome release of the soul from its earthly bonds<sup>62</sup>. And we can read Sęp Szarzyński's poetry as expressing a desire for death. The characters of the heroic poems uniformly choose death, yet therein lies another paradox: there is a conflict between the soul, which wants to fly away, and the body which needs earthly pleasures and restrains the soul. The body and the soul are elements that move in opposite directions. The first is subject to the laws of gravity while the second belongs to the sphere above. Between these two worlds, appears a fold which connects them: *a movement*. The infinite fold moves between matter and soul. And here, between one fold (a soul) and another one (a body) we can place the human being who contains both elements: a divine soul and a profane body. They coexist in every individual. The drama of humankind is that they are inseparable while people live.

The struggle between a body and a soul cause a human course. When the soul wants to escape from life and leads people towards death and God, the body desires earthly pleasures and escapes from death.<sup>63</sup> Thus, human beings find themselves in state of a perpetual escape. The fear of being suddenly struck down by death's scythe stems from the human's sin. Death in a state of sin destroys any chance of humans achieving eternal happiness. Thus, death as a result of sin and a reason for mankind's course turns out to be one of folds which appear in existence and spread out between the spheres of earth and heaven.

The image of death allows us to compare it to Fortune. The only difference is that death is ultimate and does not tarry ('śmierć nikomu folgi nie czyni').

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<sup>62</sup> Grudzień 42.

<sup>63</sup> The conflict between the soul and the body will be explored in the third part of this thesis.

## b) *The Image of Fortune*

From ancient times the figure of Fortune has been the personification of luck. Her<sup>64</sup> popularity increased in the Middle Ages when she started to be identified with the Greek goddess, Tyche, and became an embodiment of fate and destiny. Fortune started to symbolise a sphere of human life which did not seem to correspond to a rational order. In the seventeenth century, Fortune became synonymous with variability and mutability. Céspedes y Meneses, a Renaissance Spanish novelist, called Fortune ‘the enemy of all stability and calm’.<sup>65</sup> She was responsible for changes and caused the movement which disturbed the human sphere. Maravall notes that Fortune was ‘a strange, changeable and unattainable force in the face of the course of events or, at least, in relation to a particular sphere of human events’.<sup>66</sup>

The concept of Fortune helped to explain all that was incomprehensible to human beings. It filled the space between their world and that of God. Between these two folds, there was a fold which did not belong to either. In the sphere of humans, all phenomena are subjects of human reason and knowledge. The other world is out of human reach, it is the world of nature governed by God’s will. Between these two spaces there was a gap which was bridged by the image of Fortune – a multiple force which could not be understood by human beings and which was, simultaneously in opposition to the stability signified by God.

From ancient times Fortune has been associated with femininity. Howard Patch claims that ‘the fundamental idea of ‘Fortuna’ is the bestower, the connotation is that of the creative goddess (...). Other feminine qualities were also present in the idea such as mobility, inconstancy, capriciousness’.<sup>67</sup> In medieval art, Fortune was often presented as a woman seated at a wheel which she was turning.<sup>68</sup> In the history of Fortune iconography it seems that the sphere was the earlier symbol, but in the twelfth century the wheel predominated. Fortune, rather

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<sup>64</sup> As Fortune has been often presented as a woman, I use the pronoun ‘she/her’ rather than ‘it’.

<sup>65</sup> Céspedes y Meneses quoted after Maravall 189.

<sup>66</sup> Maravall 189.

<sup>67</sup> Howard Rollin Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Roman Literature and in the Transitional Period*, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages Ser. vol. 3, no. 3 (Northampton, MA: Smith College, 1922) 141.

<sup>68</sup> For instance: *Blind Goddess Fortune with King Arthur Enthroned*, c.1316.

than being a passive figure within the wheel, as she is sometimes depicted, is here the active and unceasing rotator of the wheel.<sup>69</sup> The wheel symbolises the life of a human being which is determined by Fortune's will. In the illustration of *Carmina Burana* the wheel shows a human figure in four stages of his life, labelled on the left *regnabo* (I shall reign), on the top - while the figure is crowned - *regno* (I reign), descending on the right *regnavi* (I have reigned) and the lowly figure at the bottom is marked *sum sine regno* (I have no kingdom).<sup>70</sup> In Roman art Fortune additionally has other attributes, such as the horn of plenty, the rudder or the oar, the ball. She can also possess a measure of fruit, ears of corn, prow of a ship, wings and the libation bowl.<sup>71</sup> Sometimes she is presented as a steers woman on a boat during a storm. Fortune's association with the boat refers to the topos of peregrinatio vitae and the boat is a metaphor of human life.

However, although Fortune's power was compared to God's, she could only affect the human sphere and not other phenomena in the macrocosm. 'Fortuna domina est rerum humanarum'<sup>72</sup> - this medieval sentence perfectly reflects the place of Fortune in the poetic imaginary of Sęp Szarzyński.

The earliest images of Fortune were introduced by Christian philosopher Boethius in his *De consolazione philosophiae* written around the year 524. In *Book 2*, Fortune's image is the legacy of the Greek goddess Tyche. In *Book 4*, she is identified with Divine Providence and distinguished from fatum. In *Book 5*, Boethius discusses the compatibility of Providence and free will.<sup>73</sup> We find other examples in *Carmina Burana* from 1230, where 'the attitude to Fortune remains entirely conventional, seeing in her a personification of sublunar fortuitousness and the transience of worldly prosperity'.<sup>74</sup> The topos of Fortune is also used in Petrarca's poetry or Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*.

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<sup>69</sup> Tony Hunt, 'The Christianization of Fortune,' *Fortune and Women in Medieval Literature*, ed. Catherine R. Attwood, Nottingham French Studies, vol. 38, no. 2 (Nottingham: Nottingham University Press, 1999) 111.

<sup>70</sup> 'Fortuna', <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortuna>, 07.06.2008.

<sup>71</sup> Patch, *The tradition* 144-145.

<sup>72</sup> 'Fortune is the mistress of human affairs' (my translation). Jacek Sokolski, *Bogini - Pojęcie – Demon: Fortuna w dziełach autorów staropolskich* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1996) 83.

<sup>73</sup> Hunt 101.

<sup>74</sup> Hunt 104.

In Alciato's<sup>75</sup> *Emblem XCVIII (Ars Naturam adiuvans)* there is a woodcut showing Fortune as a naked woman with a band over her eyes, standing on the globe (sphere). In the background there are two ships. Close to her sits Hermes. To underscore her importance, Fortune is represented as being larger than the globe. Her eyes are shaded because she does not reward people equally and she is blind to justice. Her blindness can also be connected with the irrational element in her acts which cause chaos and anarchy. Hermes is equivalent to Mercury – the Roman deity of orators and wit, literature and poets. Hence, Mercury is a representation of *bonae artes*, of knowledge and reason while Fortune is a personification of chance and decay. In addition, Mercury is the god of road travellers and merchants, hence he is governed by Fortune and submits to her whims.

Though representations of Fortune vary slightly through different epochs, from medieval times they carry a pejorative meaning and she is synonymous with multiplicity, considered as humankind's enemy who destroys the natural order created by God. Fortune is a mysterious force which causes movement in life and is responsible for changes in the world. H. R. Patch maintains that Fortune is 'a personification of the capricious and changeable influence, sometimes gloomy, sometimes favourable, which is seen in the life of individuals and of nations, and which without the appearance of any rule, whether of logic or morality, bestows success or inflicts its opposite. She is distinguished from Fate in that Fate is the expression of a law which reason admits without always explaining it; (...) Fortuna – full of incoherence and even of injustice defies all reason and repels the moral sense'.<sup>76</sup> Sometimes she is also compared to death. In the poem by Stanisław Morsztyn<sup>77</sup>, Fortune is called the sister of Death. In Antiquity Fortune was identified with Lachesis, the second of the Three Fates or Moirae. This reflects the fact that in this way she became a sister to Atropos who cuts the thread of life. Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński's poetry contains all of these traditional images of Fortune.

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<sup>75</sup> Alciati (Andreas Alciatus, 1492 – 1550) was an Italian writer known as the author of *Emblemata* (1531).

<sup>76</sup> Patch, *The Tradition* 142.

<sup>77</sup> Stanisław Morsztyn, 'Smutne żale po utraconych dzieciach: Żal szósty,' *Poeci polskiego baroku*, ed. Jadwiga Sokołowska and Kazimiera Żukowska, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1965) 111.



The notion of Fortune is essential to Sęp Szarzyński's poetry. As a first example I will quote the poem *Statua Fortuny*:

‘Pani to wszytkiego:  
Sprawa świata tego  
Jej jest poruczona;  
Fortuna rzeczona.  
Nic przez niej syn Maje,  
Co mu dani daje  
Człowiek zyskiem żywy.  
Mars, rozlać krew chciwy,  
U niej w rękę stoi.  
I ten się jej boi,  
Co go Wenus pali.  
I on też ją chwali,  
Co z swej pracy żywie  
Z potem i ściśliwie.  
I ów ją rad widzi,  
Co z niej w rzeczy szydzi.  
Bo ta mądrą radę,  
Gdy chce, wzmieni w zwadę.  
Ta z króla nędznika,  
Króla z niewolnika  
Uczyni, gdy raczy.  
A tego nie baczy,  
Komu da swe dary,  
W których żadnej wiary  
Nie zachowywuje.  
Tak ona żartuje!  
W samej niestałości  
Trwa przez odmienności:  
Tu i owdzie błądzić,  
Nierządnie świat rządzić.  
W tem się mniejszą czuje,  
I że ustępuje  
Uporczywej cnocie;  
Z tą zawsze w kłopotcie.’

*‘She's mistress of all:  
Rule of this earth  
To her is entrusted;  
Fortune she's called.  
But for her, Maia's son, whom  
She grants gifts, be naught.  
Man, living for gain,  
Mars, fast to shed blood,  
Stand both in her hand.  
He fears her even  
Whom Venus enflames;  
He praises her too,  
Who lives by his toil,  
In sweat and in thrift.*

*Kindly at her he'd look,  
 Who mocks her in word;  
 For wise deliberation,  
 Wishing, she'd turn to dispute.  
 Of a king, a pauper,  
 Of a slave, a king,  
 Should she will, she'd make.  
 She's heedless on whom  
 Her gifts she bestows,  
 In which no trust  
 Is she wont to keep.  
 So doth she sport!  
 Through inconstancy alone  
 She endures unchanging,  
 To wander hither and yon,  
 Ruling earth with no rules.  
 In this tho, she's less:  
 Unto virtue persisting  
 Would she fast submit,  
 With it forever in strife.'*  
 (Fortune's Statue)

In this poem Sęp Szarzyński refers to the medieval representations of Fortune. The word 'Fortuna' in Polish possesses the feminine gender, thus in Sęp Szarzyński's poems, the femininity of this image is essential. She is described as a 'mistress of all', a goddess of the whole earth. She is represented as a queen who establishes rules and governs all mankind. Although the future of the world lies in her hands ('sprawa świata tego jest jej poruczona'), she belongs only to the human world which is emphasised by using the word 'this [earth]' ('[świata] tego'). She is 'ruling the world with no rules', thus, the order that she settles is upside down, it is disorder which remains in opposition to God's law. For Sęp Szarzyński, Fortune is a synonym of chaos and change. She is characterised by inconstancy. Fortune is blind to justice, her decisions are unpredictable and she rewards people one day only to take away everything the next. Fortune's chief characteristic is change – those who were 'up' can suddenly be 'down'. In a similar way to death, Fortune unites people from the highest to the lowest ranks of society. All humans are equal in their confrontation with her:

'Ta z króla nędznika,  
 Króla z niewolnika  
 Uczyni, gdy raczy.'

*'Of a king, a pauper,  
 Of a slave, a king,  
 Should she will, she'd make.'*

She triumphs over other deities whose power is insufficient to overcome Fortune's rules. Mars and Venus cannot tame Fortune's trickery and they become her slaves. There is only one force that proves to be stronger than Fortune: virtue. Hence, the only way to combat Fortune is through practising virtue. Sęp Szarzyński's influence lies in the image of a struggle between Fortune and virtue, popular amongst the Stoics. Its most significant representation can be found in Seneca's works and Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae*. In the Renaissance the phrase *Virtus domitor Fortunae* (*Virtue triumphs over Fortune*) was commonly employed. Hermes in the European literary tradition is often connected with Fortune and appears as the champion of Virtue in her combat with Fortune. This is illustrated in M. Raimondi's engraving *The Virtue as Domitor Fortunae*, 1510<sup>78</sup>. In the last three stanzas of *Statua Fortuny*, Sęp Szarzyński refers to the first phrase and ends the poem with the stoic reflection that virtue is the only weapon against Fortune. The epithet 'uporczywa' (*persisting*) means that only a virtue that is strong and stable can triumph over Fortune. Human beings can find a refuge from Fortune's whims in their own virtue.

In Sęp Szarzyński's later poems Fortune becomes more dynamic. She represents a hectic movement in contrast to the natural order and God's stability. Fortune as an element of disorder in the universe is presented in *Prośba do Boga z Boeciusa*:

'Na nędzną ziemię racz mieć wzgląd, Panie,  
Którego ten świat trzyma staranie.  
Sprawę rąk twoich, część niewzgardzoną  
Wichrzy Fortuna burzą szaloną;  
Ślepa, prócz braku rozsiewa szkody.'

*'For a paltry earth have regard, O Lord,  
Thou whose effort maintaineth this world,  
Unto this fragment undespised, thy hands' toil,  
Fortune, a raging blast, bring disorder;  
Blind, her malice she sows undiscerning.'*  
(A Plea Unto God [From Boethius])

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<sup>78</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, 'Chance, Time and Virtue,' *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1938): 320.

As I mentioned above, Boethius is the originator of Fortune's image in the Christian tradition. Fortune's power is reflected by the following lines:

*'W tym leży moc moja, tą ciągłą zabawą igram, kręcę w krąg koło bezustannym rozmachem, cieszy mnie zmiana tego, co najwyższe, na to, co najniższe i tego, co najniższe na to, co najwyższe'*<sup>79</sup>

In the Polish poet's verse Fortune is blind (In *Song IX* she is a 'blind Goddess') and like death, sows discord blindly ('na oślep rozsiewa szkody i wichrzy'). H. R. Patch remarks that some expressions describing Fortune have survived from ancient times to the present the most popular being: 'she is blind', 'she is stubborn', 'she plays games, and men are pawns in the games', 'She becomes a foe', 'she follows her own course'.<sup>80</sup> The description of Fortune is likewise dynamic – the three words that accompany the word 'Fortuna' ('wichrzy/ burzą/ szaloną') are connected with movement, which is also underlined by the onomatopoeic effect of the collected consonants ('ch-rz-sz'). Chaotic movement is the principal characteristic of Fortune. She is a personification of change, variety, instability, and most of all – of chance and human error. This explains why she is often compared to storms and turmoil, connected with water and madness. Water is the sign of Fortune. Her activity is often shown as a flood. In Sęp Szarzyński's poetry, human life is tossed about by Fortune like a boat on a wild sea during a storm ('Fortuna szalona upiornie błądzi').

All the images connected with Fortune are dynamic and reflect a world of chaos and disorder. In *Epitaforium Rzymowi* she reduces all walls to rubble and destroys civilisation. Ruins are evidence of time passing and reflect the character of Fortune, who plays with people and, by playing tricks, destroys all human efforts to build something solid and stable in this world. Paradoxically, in this poem change and decay coexist and they become a permanent element of human endurance. Between life, decay and rebirth there is a movement, a fold which connects them. One transforms into another and endures in a different form:

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<sup>79</sup> My translation: 'My strength lies therein, the continuous game I am playing, spinning a wheel with a ceaseless swing, I'm happy to change what is the highest into what is the lowest and what is the lowest into what is the highest.'

Mrowcewicz, *Czemu* 47.

<sup>80</sup> Patch, *The Tradition* 151.

‘Ty, co Rzym wpośród Rzymu chcąc baczyć, pielgrzymie,  
 A wždy baczyć nie możesz w samym Rzymu Rzymie,  
 Patrzaj na okrąg murów i w rum obrócone  
 Teatra i kościoły, i słupy stłuczone (...)  
 Dziś w Rzymie zwyciężonym Rzym niezwyciężony  
 (To jest ciało w swym cieniu), leży pogrzebiony.  
 Wszystko się w nim zmieniło, sam trwa prócz odmiany  
 Tyber, z piaskiem do morza co bieży zmieszany.  
 Patrz, co Fortuna broi: to się popsowało,  
 Co było nieruchome; trwa, co się ruchało.’  
 (Epitafium Rzymowi)

*‘If midst Rome you wish to see Rome, pilgrim,  
 Tho in Rome naught of Rome might you see,  
 Behold the walls' ring, the theatres, temples  
 And ruptured pillars, to rubble all turned (...)  
 Today in broken Rome, Rome unbroken  
 (A substance in its shadow) lies entombed.  
 Within all's changed; alone past change  
 Tiber remains, that to sea runs mixed with sand.  
 See what Fortune plays: 'tis wasted away,  
 What was unmoving; what moved, yet remains.’*  
 (Epitaph to Rome)

The anagram *rum-mur* reflects Fortune's tricks. This opposition is also an onomatopoeic image of the collapse of buildings, but what is more it shows the irony of Fate which juggles with mankind's destiny. The different arrangement of the same letters is merely a graphic illustration of historical change – the wall is transformed into ruins. Stability, then, is tantamount to instability as the body is to its shadow. In contrast – what is in motion endures. Everything is turned upside down. Fortune turns all vertical constructions into ruins, and thus becomes a part of earthly linear time. The order of the macrocosm is in contradiction to Fortune's mutability. In this poem accordingly horizontal images can be seen to dominate: ‘Rzym leży pogrzebiony’ and the Tiber which flows on the horizontal line is eternal.

In *Pieśń IX* Fortune's action has been symbolised as a flood. Water, in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry, is usually connected with misfortune, fate in its aleatory fluidity. Water and Fortune are synonyms of instability and change and also of the course of human life or perpetual movement. But the nature of Fortune and water also reflects the idea of time. Only change is unchangeable. This is a reference to Heraclites' *Panta rhei* and is the reason why in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry we find the symbol of the river – simultaneously changeable and eternal:

‘Wszystko się w nim zmieniło, sam trwa prócz odmiany  
Tyber, z piaskiem do morza, co bieży zmieszany.’  
(*Epitafium Rzymowi*)

*‘Within all's changed; alone past change  
Tiber remains, that to sea runs mixed with sand.’*  
(*Epitaph to Rome*)

The permanence of memory is based on the immutability of nature's law. The rivers Bug, Rastawica, Dniestr – the flow of Heraclites' river continues into the future as does the hero's famous name. Sęp Szarzyński often compares fame to the flowing river:

‘Także Rastawica, potok nieszczęśliwy,  
Pierwej wód pozbędzie, niżli twe, pocziwy  
I nietrwożny Strusie, żywota skończenie  
U rycerskich ludzi przyjdzie w zapomnienie.’  
(*Pieśń VI*)

*‘Faster shall Rastawica, ill-luck's stream  
First loose her waters, daring and worthy  
Strus, than would thy life's ending pass  
To obscurity 'mongst those of the knightly caste.’*

But this poem is exceptional in the way it presents water as a symbol imbued with positive values. In other poems it is a sign of sin, unhappiness (although even in *Pieśń o Strusie* ‘Potok [jest] nieszczęśliwy’ – *the river is unhappy*) and Fortune. Fortune in Sęp Szarzyński's works is an untamed, uncontrollable element, movement, which causes human instability. It moves in circles:

‘Tak ona żartuje!  
W samej niestałości  
Trwa przez odmienności (...)’  
(*Statua Fortuny*)

*‘So doth she sport!  
Through inconstancy alone  
She endures unchanging(...)’*

In this poem Sęp Szarzyński employs two words with opposite meanings: 'niestałość' (*instability*) and 'trwać' (*to last*). By this oxymoron, he connects them. This paradox is the result of Fortune's actions: the chaos, which she brings, is incomprehensible to the human being. It rules people's actions and replaces the order of the macrocosm with mutability.

When Sęp Szarzyński writes about Fortune,

'Lecz ta niech zwyczaj zmieni; śmierć folgi nie czyni.'

(*Pieśń IX*)

'*And should habit she change, death tarries not.*'

- he suggest that she be allowed to change her changeable nature, in other words – to disappear. The paradox soothes the awareness of change and turns the mind towards eternity. Sęp Szarzyński tries to eliminate movement and change precisely by an excess of movement and change. Although Fortune is not merciful to people, Sęp Szarzyński sometimes differentiates *Fortuna mala* and *Fortuna bona*. For example, he writes about changeable happiness ('szczęście zmienne') in *Fraszka z Marcyjalisa* and realises that 'tu na ziemi, wesołe się mieszają sprawy z troskliwemi' (*Do Zosie*). He emphasises the ambiguity of Fortune – her capacity for metamorphosis and blind, indiscriminating action (in *Fraszka do Anusi* he calls her 'careless Fortune' - 'niebaczna Fortuna'). Change is innate to Fortune and 'niespokojne koło czasem toczy' (*sometimes the wheel spins erratically*).

In the poem *Na herb Leliwę* Fortune is compared to the moon:

'Patrzaj na dowcip Leliwy męznego,  
Jak herb wytworny dał do domu swego:  
Miesiąc w odmiennej, w jednej twarzy chodzi  
Wdzięczna Jutrzenka i słońce przywodzi.  
Tamten Fortuny, ta Cnoty obrazem;  
Dobrze, kto posiadł tę parę zarazem,  
Lecz komu cieniem zajdzie szczęścia koło,  
Kazał trwać, światła czekając wesoło.'

'*Look on the wit of manly Leliwa,  
How a fine Crest he gave his house:  
Whilst the Moon's asundry, straightfaced moves  
Fair Morning Star, leading on the sun.  
Fortune, the former – virtue, the latter;  
Fine if in union this pair might be owned,  
Yet for whom fate's wheel in shadow declines,*

*'Twould have him endure, in joy awaiting the light.'*  
(*On the Crest of Leliwa*)

Sęp Szarzyński refers in this poem to the medieval proverb 'The wheel of Fortune changes like the moon'.<sup>81</sup> Medieval representations of Fortune emphasise her duality and instability, such as two faces side by side: one face smiling the other frowning or half the face white and the other black. Jutrzenka (*the Morning Star*) is identified with the sun and virtue while the moon is the sign of Fortune. The changeable moon represents two faces of Fortune: bright and dark. This poem is built on the opposition of the moon's change in its different phases to the stability that is symbolised by the morning light ('Jutrzenka'). The tradition of Fortune as a lunar deity has a long literary tradition, dating back to the ancient times. The opening of *Carmina Burana* demonstrates the longevity of this tradition:

'O Fortuna  
Velut luna  
Statu variabilis  
Simpliciter crescis  
Aut decrescis'<sup>82</sup>

*'O Fortune,  
like the moon  
The state constantly changing,  
always growing  
or decreasing'*

The moon in the Bible is a symbol of change and of life passing by, but the phrase 'Formula velut luna' refers also to the traditional view of Fortune as a deity of harvest and abundance. Fortune was often pictured with a horn of plenty. Later she was connected with the vegetative cycle. The link between the vegetative and the lunar cycles led to Fortune's being compared to the moon. Fortune turns her wheel according to the way the moon changes, which is why Sęp Szarzyński writes:

'Lecz komu cieniem zajdzie szczęścia koło,  
Kazał trwać, światła czekając wesoło.'  
(*Na herb Leliwę*)

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<sup>81</sup> Radosław Grzeškowiak, Adam Karpiński and Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, afterword, 'Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński: Poezje zebrane,' (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN: Stowarzyszenie "Pro Cultura Litteraria" 2001) 212.

<sup>82</sup> Sokolski 122.



*'Yet for whom fate's wheel in shadow declines,  
'Twould have him endure, in joy awaiting the light.'  
(On the Crest of Leliwa)*

*'O, szczęśliwy, kto stanu dostawszy wielkiego,  
Pomni, czym był, i baczy moc szczęścia zmiennego.'  
(Fraszka z Martialisza)*

*'O kontent be the man having gained high rank,  
Recalls who he was and frail fortune's might sees.  
(A Trifle from Martial)*

Hope helps the human being to survive through to better times. In Fortune's nature lies the consolation that her changeable 'personality' means not only a temporal happiness, but also a temporal unhappiness ('szczęście oboje'). Hence the advice in Sęp Szarzyński's 'trifle':

*'Miej Fortunę na wodzy, który z ubogiego  
Stanu prędko dostąpisz stolca wysokiego.'  
(Fraszka)<sup>83</sup>*

This verse also emphasises the changeable nature of Fortune which sometimes allows humans attain the 'heights', while at other times causes their fall. It reinforces the conviction that nothing is stable in this world.

The poems cited above were probably written in the early phase of Sęp Szarzyński's writing, because in *Pieśń IX* he indicates:

*'Sława smaczna, rozkoszy, władza, siła złota,  
Drugdy twa, Zeno twardy, słowem stalna cnota,  
Wątle tamy na powódź zaćmionej Bogini!  
(Pieśń IX)*

*'Sweet fame, power, delights, gold aplenty,  
Once, stern Zeno, thy supposed steely virtue,  
But frail dams to the blind goddess' torrent!'*

It is significant that virtue is always described by words associated with hardness and strength: 'uporczywa', 'twarda', 'stalna'. But in this poem even virtue is not enough to combat the chaos of life which is symbolised by the flood caused by

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<sup>83</sup> My translation: 'Keep a tight reign on Fortune, you, who from indigent status suddenly obtain a high position'.

Fortune. The stoic outlook is still alive here in the refusal of all earthly goods, but at the same time the fear that nothing can tame Fortune is evident.

Accordingly to Christian – stoic philosophy, also wisdom, helps people to overcome their fears and emotions, and to protect them from Fortune's games. Jan z Trzciany (c. 1510 – 1567) believed that wisdom can help people, releasing them from cares and bringing them happiness, or even redemption. Erasmus likewise claimed that a man who is governed by wisdom can avoid the temptations of earthly pleasures and be free<sup>84</sup>. The stoic recommendation of virtue as a remedy against the caprices of chance was transmitted by Petrarch (*De Remediis ultriskue Fortunae*) to the humanists of the Renaissance.<sup>85</sup> Thus, virtue and wisdom can lead in the opposite direction to Fortune's movement and can tame her. Stoic behaviour controls and slows down the hectic motion of pure chance. But is it possible, if Sęp Szarzyński claims:

‘Szaleństwo prawie  
Ludzkie rozumy!’  
(*O tymże epigramma abo napis krótki*)

‘Madness indeed,  
The human mind!’  
(*An Epigram on the Same, or a Short Inscription*)

And then asks:

‘Daleś rozum – przecz u nas fortuna sie rodzi?’  
(*Pieśń II*)  
‘Thou gavst reason - why's fortune born unto us?’

Fortune belongs to the human sphere. It was not created by God, it is ‘born unto us’. Hence, Fortune remains in opposition to reason. Reason (‘rozum’) does not have a Cartesian meaning, it is identified with wisdom, God's law, the light of God in humans which leads them in the right direction. The mind does not offer full recognition and knowledge, it should be governed by love, which is why the lyrical subject pleads:

‘(...) daleś sie poznać: daj, niech serce pali,  
Co rozum chwali.’  
(*Pieśń III*)

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<sup>84</sup> Mrowcewicz, *Czemu* 157.

<sup>85</sup> Wittkower 316.

*'Thou gavst knowledge, let then the heart glow  
With what reason extols!'*

Mankind's hope lies in the Lord. There lies a stability in God's judgment upon Fortune's and death's whims - their lawlessness and uncontrolled acts. And although sometimes it seems that humanity's ship is steered by accident, there is a superior law, which gives humans hope that they are sailing into a safe harbour. Hence the human request for aid during this dangerous journey:

*'Mając umysł stateczny czynić, co należy,  
Niech moja łódź, gdzie pędzi wola Boża, bieży  
I przy brzegu, który mi Bóg wyznaczył, stanie,  
Jeśli nie jest bezportne ludzkie żeglowanie (...)*

*Ty mię więc, ty sturuj sam; tak skończę bieg wcale.'*  
(*Pieśń IX*)

*'Having stable mind to do what is right,  
Let my vessel then race where God's will plies,  
And on the shore God hath assigned me, stop,  
If mankind's sailing be not without port (...)*

*Lead me, steer alone, so intact I'd end my course.'*

This example clearly presents the opposition between the chaos of human existence dynamically described as the course of life and the stillness which is attributed to God. Stillness is a characteristic possessed by God alone and it finally defeats Fortune.

*'Nie trafunek przygodny ludzkie sprawy rządzi:  
I fortunę szaloną, choć upiornie błądzi,  
Chelzna twardym muńsztukiem twego moc rządzenia,  
O mądrości, wszytkiego żywocie stworzenia!'*  
(*Pieśń I*)

*'Blind chance sways not man's affairs;  
On mad fortune too, tho stubborn it strays,  
The power of Thy rule fixes a hardened bit,  
O Wisdom, O Life o'er all in creation!'*

'Trafunek przygodny' (*blind chance*), 'Szalona Fortuna' (*mad Fortune*) and 'upiornie błądzić' (*stubborn it strays*) – all these phrases create a movement and chaos in the first two lines while the following two contain expressions such as: 'chelznać' (*fixes*), 'twardy muńsztunek' (*a hardened bit*) and 'moc rządzenia' (*power of Thy rule*) which introduce the idea of order and wisdom of a world

governed by God. God causes movement in the universe, but simultaneously remains the still point ('sam przez się żyje' - *Thine own E'er sustained*). This way God becomes synonymous with serenity which is beyond the reach of human beings.

The world in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry seems to be divided into this binary opposition: Fortune which is an embodiment of the chaos of earthly life and nature that is governed by God. However, between these contradictions, a human being exists. He/she becomes a link connecting them. As long as the person lives, he/she is subjected to changes but is also a part of nature with its eternal rules within God's great plan. Human beings connect these two worlds whilst Fortune as a movement conveys people from one state to another. In bringing change she forms a link between a finite existence on earth on the one hand, and on the other, eternity representing a transient movement between these two spheres. Sęp Szarzyński's poems such as *EpitaŃium Rzymowi* or *Pieśń o Strusie* emphasise the multiplicity of Fortune as a personification of both death and rebirth.

The images of death and Fortune show how movement becomes a permanent element of human life. As individuals comprised of both body and soul, human beings live between two worlds, the earthly and the transcendental. Images in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry unite them in one poetic space, where multiplicity links the paradoxes of human existence.

## 1. 4 Movement within the Verse Structure of the Poetic Text

The images as well as the poetics of Sęp Szarzyński's poetry are intrinsically connected. Therefore, it is impossible to separate any analysis of the 'content' from its poetics.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the idea of movement is not reflected alone by the poetic images but also by its stylistic features. The world in motion and the sense of its instability is created by the versification, syntactical construction, rhetorical figures and the graphic layout of the text. Although the same figures of speech can play more than one role, in this chapter, I will focus on their connection with the idea of movement.

Sęp Szarzyński exaggerated the idea of movement by a use of language which was unique, especially against the background of Renaissance literature<sup>87</sup>. His condensed and concise style employing mainly abstract notions, focused on creating distant and unexpected associations and connotations of words, often by breaking their typical collocations. No other poet before Sęp Szarzyński so consciously used language to build up disharmony and tension within the poetry. The language and poetics constitute the folds which inherently belong to Sęp Szarzyński's poetic world. These folds appear between the lyrical subject and the reader, whose activity and collaboration are indispensable to comprehend the depth of this poetry.

One of the most dynamic images is a lively description of Fridrusz's struggle in *Pieśń V*:

‘To rzekszy, jako z działła śmiertelnego  
Kamień, płomienia gwałtem siarczystego  
Z hukiem wyparty, jako przez wiatr rzadki  
Leci przez ciała dając im upadki,

Tak mężny Fridrusz, gniewy ślachtetnemi  
Zapaleń, z zamku z krzyki rycerskiemi  
Wypadł i przeszedł zastęp niezliczony  
Swą i tatarską prawie krwią zjuszony.’

Tam zaś, by tygrys, gdy swe baczy dzieci  
Miedzy myśliwcy, choć tysiąc strzał leci,  
Wpada w pośrodek, nie o ratunk dbając,  
Ale o pomstę, szkodzi i konając.’

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<sup>86</sup> Bogusław Wyderka, *Przedziwny wszędzie: O stylu Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego na tle tendencji stylistycznych poezji polskiego renesansu* (Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2002) 113.

<sup>87</sup> Błoński claims that Sęp Szarzyński's syntax is the most perverse, at least until Przyboś (the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Polish poet). Błoński 76.

The entire depiction is built up along the idea of movement. Fridrusz, initially compared to a violently thrown stone, transforms into a tiger. This association lacks logic, instead it is based on the motion of images. It is not a picture that evokes a movement, on the contrary – the movement determines and provokes the picture.<sup>88</sup> Accordingly, an asymmetry of the verses and their irregular intonation completes the impression of movement, chaos and disequilibrium evident in Sęp Szarzyński's poetic world.

Changes within the syntax are embodiments of the world's dynamism. They are instruments to show phenomena in their transience and evanescence. The complex syntax is not only a reflection of the author's dexterity but most of all it helps to describe a reality incomprehensible to any human being who tries to find their place in this world of constant movement. **Inversion** is one of the poetic tools employed, suggesting dynamic space:

‘Lecz niniejszy  
Iż czas przyniósł, we zbroi zdasz się najpiękniejszy.’  
(*Pieśń VII*)<sup>89</sup>

‘Abo gdy światłem uderzy go w oczy  
Słońce, ognistym gdy sie kołem toczy?’  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

Inversions by changing the word order cause disharmony within the text and emphasise also its expressiveness. They compel the reader to work with the text, the eyes move from side to side, up and down in search of the correct word order. In the second example, the impression is even stronger as Sęp Szarzyński depicts the Sun's motion. Due to the complex inversion, the reader ‘circles’ around the text in an attempt to comprehend its meaning, thereby sensing the circular motion of the moving Sun (‘kołem toczy’). Inversions in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry are usually accompanied by **enjambements**. B. Wyderka calculated that they constitute 21,3 % of Sęp Szarzyński's verses (19 % in *Erotics*).<sup>90</sup> The most common enjambement tears apart the two component groups of nouns and adjectives with simultaneous inversion:

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<sup>88</sup> Błoński 76.

<sup>89</sup> I do not provide translations of the poems in this chapter as the English versions do not always reflect the originals' poetic structures.

<sup>90</sup> Wyderka 251.

‘Patrzaj na okrąg murów i w rum obrócone  
Teatra i kościoły, i słupy stłuczone.’  
 (Epitafium Rzymowi)

‘(...) Nędzna pociecha, gdy żądzą zwiedzione  
Myśli cukrują nazbyt rzeczy one (...)’  
 (Sonet V)

In the first quotation, the logical word order would be as follows: ‘Patrzaj na okrąg murów i teatra, i kościoły, i słupy stłuczone, w rum obrócone’. In the second fragment, the word ‘rzeczy’ constitutes the subject of the sentence shifted to the end of the second line: ‘Nędzna pociecha, gdy rzeczy one nazbyt cukrują myśli żądzą zwiedzione.’

Much more sophisticated are enjambements with complex morphology which disrupt the semantic coherence of the text. The reader is forced to reconstruct the sentence’s syntax:

‘Farbę Bugowej, widziałem, krew wody  
 Nasza zmieniła (...)’  
 (Pieśń V)

‘To są Rzym. Widzisz, jako miasta tak możnego  
 I trup szczęścia poważność wypuszcza pierwszego.’  
 (Epitafium Rzymowi)

The subject of this verse is a noun ‘krew’ and the direct object is the noun ‘farbę’, thus the sentence in its typical word order would be: ‘Widziałem, nasza krew zmieniła farbę Bugowej wody’ (*I saw, our blood has changed the colour of the Bug’s water*). In the poem *Epitafium Rzymowi*, the subject is ‘trup miasta’ (*the city’s corpse*), not ‘trup szczęścia’ (*the corpse of happiness*) as the first reading suggests.

Disguised enjambements are particularly elaborate and confirm their very conscious usage. The first part of the sentence seems to make sense as a whole, but when the reader continues reading, he or she realises that the sentence continues onto the next line, which sometimes changes its meaning entirely:

‘I nie miłować ciężko, i miłować  
 nędzna pociecha (...)’  
 (Sonet V)

The first sentence is complete as it stands: 'I nie miłować ciężko, i miłować'. Its syntactic self-containment and reference to Kochanowski's verse 'Ciężko, kto nie miłuje, ciężko, kto miłuje' (*Fraszki I*, 39), which causes a subconscious association in the reader's perception is, in fact, a linguistic trap. As the poem unfolds, a new meaning reveals itself. The modification consists in using infinitives instead of conjugated verbs and in the enjambement. Rather than the outright negation of love (assumed to mean 'worldly love') which the reader expects, the poet offers instead a subtle, riddling, oxymoronic valorization of love as 'nędzna pociecha' (*dreary comfort*). This game of aroused and unfulfilled expectations is a typical feature of Sęp Szarzyński's poetics.<sup>91</sup>

The coherence and order in the verse is sometimes disrupted by a figure of speech called **hyperbaton**, which is a dramatic departure from standard word order by separating the natural collocations:

‘A chciwa może odciąć rozkosz nędzą  
Śmierć – tuż za nami spore czyni kroki!’  
 (Sonet I)

Upon the first reading, there is ambiguity as to which noun the epithet 'chciwa' belongs, since a misleading collocation with the word 'rozkosz' is offered. However, the reader discovers that the subject of this sentence is in fact 'śmierć', which is placed at the beginning of the second line.

The dramatic and dynamic character of the text can be elicited by **conjunctionless sentences**:

‘Strzeż się: oto bije!’  
 (Napis na statuetę...)

‘Czy mi chcesz być przewodnią? Nie było potrzeba:  
 Wiem ja z twojej nauki, gdzie droga do nieba.’  
 (Pannie Zofiej Kostczance...Napis trzeci)

or by single syllable words which reflect fleeting, pulsating thoughts:

‘Ale jeszcze trwa ten targ: otwórz bronę.’  
 (Pieśń V)

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<sup>91</sup> Gillespie 575.



The collision of a syntactic ellipsis and a complex sentence plays a similar role:

‘Niestale dobra! O, stokroć szczęśliwy,  
Który tych cieniów wczas zna kształt prawdziwy!’  
(*Sonet I*)

All these examples show the haste to name thoughts and objects in their passing, changeability and momentariness. They reflect the movement of the world, the human being and the language. The reader is invited to participate in a textual game created by Sęp Szarzyński in his poems. The technique that emphasises the movement in *Sonet I* is **alliteration** ‘obrotne obłoki’. This alliteration graphically imitates the motion of the spheres as well as phonetically reminding one of movement and dynamic nature.

The simultaneity of actions which intensifies the urgency of the lyrical voice is usually delivered by **participial constructions**. Participles evoke a disharmony of the sentence by creating a new level of predication. They intensify the action demonstrated by the verb and thus strengthen the effect of movement, its drama and dynamism, for example,

‘Tylkoż rzekł, wnet jako pierzchać nie uczony  
Lew, od mnogiej zgrajej będąc oskoczony.’  
(*Pieśń VI*)

‘Kamień, płomienia gwałtem siarczystego  
Z hukiem wyparty, jako przez wiatr rzadki  
Leci przez ciała dając im upadki.’  
(*Pieśń V*)

The poetic style can be fully understood if we take into account not only the images presented by the poet’s poetry but also the creation of the lyrical voice and the relations between the various textual components. Change and dynamism as essential elements of Sęp Szarzyński’s poetic style are reflected by the varied composition of poems in terms of monologue, presentation of the lyrical subject and structuralisation of the textual space.<sup>92</sup> A similar function is performed by figures of speech such as inversions and enjambements, whose depth of meaning is unparalleled in other Polish works in this era. A. Dinega Gillespie notes that Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry (using the example of *Sonet V*) ‘is not a static philosophical

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<sup>92</sup> Wyderka 243.

statement or logical structure laid out in its entirety before the rational mind, but rather a performance unfolding in time – a gradually accelerating accumulation of meanings and ambiguities, some anticipated, some unexpected and mysterious'.<sup>93</sup>

Significant for Sęp Szarzyński's style is the phenomenon of engaging the reader, who takes part in this carousel moved by Time and transported by Fortune, until the human being is intercepted by death and finally reaches God's Kingdom. Movement is therefore visible on different levels of this poetry. It creates many folds and consequently indicates a variety of directions for prospective interpretations which can complement and enrich one another.

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<sup>93</sup> Gillespie 584.

## Part 2

### *The Relation Macrocosm – Microcosm Through the Lenses of the Idea of ‘Two Floors’*

#### *2. 1 The Individualisation of Experience and the Concept of ‘Two Floors’*

The decline of the Renaissance brought many changes to social and mental spaces.<sup>94</sup> In 1543 Copernicus's work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* was published and it subsequently by presenting a new order of the universe led to a disintegration of the Aristotelian vision of the cosmos. The earth was no longer seen as the centre of all the celestial spheres. Motion of the firmament does not arise from its own course anymore, but from the earth's motion. Thus, the mental space in which Renaissance society existed was transformed with the changes in physical space. According to Deleuze 'inside' space is typologically in contact with the 'outside' space (...) and brings the two into confrontation at the limit of the living present'.<sup>95</sup>

The world became incomprehensible to people and their fundamental beliefs were challenged. Human senses were shown to be unreliable and that is why they favoured the old order. The empiricists based their knowledge on what their eyes could see. Perception led them to believe that the earth was solid and secure. From their earthly perspective they observed the sun which wheeled its daily course marking off the periods of light and darkness and the procession of seasons. 'The whirling planets, unstable clouds moved by the wind and invisible air filling the space, seemed to be too ephemeral and changeable to satisfy the human senses. All these phenomena remained in contrast to the stable earth'.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the 'old system' meant more than a philosophy, it was rooted in human minds and their beliefs. C. M. Coffin remarks: 'For instance it was thought that if the earth moved, trees would be torn up from the roots by the violence of the centrifugal force; heavy objects dropped from a height would not fall perpendicularly to the place beneath, and if Copernicus

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<sup>94</sup> The notion of 'mental space' is examined by Lefebvre, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 118-119.

<sup>96</sup> Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (New York: The Humanities Press; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958) 78.

was right, it was argued, the fixed stars ought to show an annual parallax because of the great shift in the earth's position every six months'.<sup>97</sup>

Galileo's invention of a telescope revealed a flaw in the Sun which had been considered as a perfect and even divine symbol. The telescope was one of the central instruments of what has been called the Scientific Revolution of the early seventeenth century. It revealed new phenomena in the heavens and had a profound influence on the polemics between followers of the traditional geocentric cosmology and those who favoured the heliocentric system of Copernicus. The telescope was the first extension of one of mankind's senses, but simultaneously a proof of how imperfect they were. Coffin states that 'it is to the telescope that the imagination was greatly indebted for investing space with a kind of concrete reality by bringing the immensity of the heavens into proximity with human experience'.<sup>98</sup> According to Maravall, the contribution of science, with its newly invented instruments, had an effect even on the vacillating feeling of security with regard to the things that were seen.<sup>99</sup> Galileo's findings led him to support a heliocentric view of the universe. By doing so Galileo went against the teachings of Aristotle and proved that the earth was not the centre of the universe. The Renaissance harmony evaporated as a new world order was born.

When the human eye became capable of exploring the unknown areas of space, the notion of space also changed its meaning. As W. Whewell put it 'Space (...) [was] not the notion obtained by experience'.<sup>100</sup> C. M. Coffin supports this statement claiming that 'When we speak of the reality of space, it is the illusion of modification of the properties of perceptible things (...) by the influence of space to which we refer. Though it defies sense perception, space is, nevertheless, an inseparable part of sense experience'. He cites Descartes: 'Space is the essential property of the physical world, just as thinking is the essential property of the mental world'.<sup>101</sup>

J. A. Maravall notes that Renaissance life was based on experience understood as the link between the interior of the individual with the environment he

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<sup>97</sup> Coffin 78.

<sup>98</sup> Coffin 176.

<sup>99</sup> Maravall 175.

<sup>100</sup> William Whewell, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences: Of the Idea of Space: Founded upon their history*, vol. I (London: John W. Parker 1840) 82.

<sup>101</sup> Coffin 176.

or she occupied.<sup>102</sup> An increasing interest in magic and alchemy brought a new interpretation of what had been considered as experience and exceeded its traditional meaning. This corresponded precisely with the change from the notion of the *experience* in the Renaissance, which saw in the phenomenal world a manifestation or reflection of an objective reality, to the Baroque, which saw experience as a translation of an interior vision<sup>103</sup>. Experience was interpreted as consisting of two levels: the level of spirit and that of the flesh, thus the notion of appearance in the field of literature and philosophy became a mirror of an ineffable reality. The new technological inventions caused anxiety and increased the lack of confidence in empirical experience. F. J. Warnke argues that for the artists of the Baroque, this relationship between appearance and reality had broken down. A thirst for the single reality behind the disparate appearances of experience is characteristic; no longer content with the double vision of reality, the artists of the Baroque seek not to reconcile the two worlds but to reduce them to one. Not surprisingly, Baroque literature displays an obsessive concern with the contradictory nature of experience.<sup>104</sup> The decisive role of experience, which depended on a human being's projection, was emphasized by writers such as Calderon de la Barca in his *La vide as sueño* (*Life is a Dream*).<sup>105</sup> This led to the individualisation of experience and the granting of new meaning to the notions of the individual and individuality. A. Dinéa Gillespie emphasizes the relevance of these innovations in relation to Sęp Szarzyński when she writes: 'At the highest pitch of experience the individual, sensing the illusory quality shared by both his own individuality and the entire phenomenal world, perceives experience as a shifting flux or phantasmagoria, perpetual metamorphoses'.<sup>106</sup>

At this key juncture within Polish culture Sęp Szarzyński's poetry became a bridge between the Renaissance and the Baroque period. Although the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo do not influence his works, Sęp Szarzyński does not rely on

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<sup>102</sup> Maravall 173.

<sup>103</sup> Maravall 174.

<sup>104</sup> Frank Joseph Warnke, *Versions of Baroque* (New Haven, CT.; London: Yale University Press, 1972) 21-22.

<sup>105</sup> 'What is life? A frenzy.

What is life? A fiction,

A shadow, an illusion,

And the greatest profit is small;

For all of life is a dream,

And dreams, are nothing but dreams.'

<sup>106</sup> Gillespie 569.

the illusory quality of human senses. Instead, he creates a crease between the two spheres of human existence - one is folded over another and they penetrate each other. The first one, the empirical world, which is accessible to human senses, is the deceptive testimony of human existence, while the second sphere, an internal yearning for a pure good and truth found in God, expands human minds into eternity, beyond their senses and the phenomenal world. However, the senses which, on the one hand, allow people to see, smell, hear, taste and touch, and at the same time lead them to seek earthly pleasures, on the other hand cause an indifference or blindness to the 'true beauty'. This dialectical but inevitable role of the senses exists in the universe where the fold appears between the world of human experience and a celestial sphere of incomprehensible and unreachable determiners of human existence. Sęp Szarzyński, like no other Polish poet before him based the images in his poetry on paradoxes and tension. He was a precursor of the Baroque ideas in the field of Polish poetry but simultaneously he was deeply inspired by the poetics of the Renaissance. This duality and yet unity of contrasts is visible in his vision of the cosmos. The universe in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry is highly hierarchical but a deep contrast is emphasized between the two levels, the Earth and Heaven. This duality is comparable to Deleuze's idea of *two floors*.

According to this concept, the world constitutes two levels: the lower floor is correlated to the façade, made of matter that goes down below and forms an infinite room for reception; the upper floor is closed as if it was an interior without windows and without the outside – it is the soul-room that goes up above. Between these two levels, the infinite fold (the *Zweifalt*) moves and bends them. The need of a second floor is purely metaphysical. The soul itself is what constitutes the other floor. However, one never acts upon the other, each operates according to its own laws, one by inner action, the second by outer determination. Both reflect the same thing, the world. That is why they are inseparable – the two express only one world, not two separate worlds. While one actualizes the world, the other realizes it. The upper floor is folded by the lower floor, but one does not act upon the other, instead one belongs to the other. The distinction of the two worlds is common to the Platonic tradition. The world was thought to have an infinite number of floors, with a stairway that descends and ascends, with each step being lost in the upper order of the One and disintegrated in the ocean of the multiple. But the Baroque contribution par excellence is a world with only two floors, separated by a fold that echoes itself,

arching from the two sides according to a different order. It expresses the transformation of the cosmos into a 'mundus'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold* 29.

## *2.2 The 'Two Floors' of the Universe*

Sęp Szarzyński remains a child of Antiquity and Biblical tradition in presenting a geocentric point of view. The Ptolemaic-Aristotelian scheme offered a thoroughly rational synthesis of the diverse elements comprising the spheres of both material and spiritual reality. Though different levels of existence were recognized (the natural, the human, and the divine), these levels were regarded as forming a universal hierarchy, according to their respective values, graduated upward from inanimate nature to God and knitted together by the influence imposed by the higher upon the lower.<sup>108</sup> The world is made of two kinds of matter, celestial and elemental. The celestial matter of which the heavens are composed - all of the universe above the sphere of fire - is pure and incorruptible. Both, the highest heaven of God himself and the heavens of the stars and planets are unchangeable. Though they are not subject to change, they are in motion, for motion is one of the qualities of matter. As the heavens are divine, without beginning or end, to them belongs the motion becoming to divinity, that of the circle, the motion proper also to their spherical form. Thus, the *Primum Mobile*, on the periphery of this ingenious universe, moves under the immediate compulsion of God, and in turn imparts motion, though less rapid than its own, to all the world below it. The stars and planets move in their great circles, conforming to the motion of the particular spheres to which they are attracted. The degree of purity possessed by anything is relative to its proximity to God. Consequently, of all the heavenly spheres which have bodies, the firmament of the fixed stars, being farthest removed from the centre, is most pure and contains many bodies, whereas the lower spheres have but one each. Moreover, as the rate of speed of the spheres is proportionate to their distance from the *Primum Mobile* and the centre, respectively, the firmament of the fixed stars whirls faster than the spheres below it. Beneath the celestial world is the realm of elemental matter, composed of the four elements: fire, air, water and earth, the latter, least perfect of all, lying stationary at the centre.<sup>109</sup> The cosmos (meaning 'order' in Greek) was a second layer in the hierarchy of the universe. Perfection of the cosmos is symbolized by the sphere which in the Platonic tradition was conceived as a divine figure. The sphere

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<sup>108</sup> Coffin 21.

<sup>109</sup> Coffin 44-45.



consists of ‘zamknięte w sobie wszystkie inne kształty [...], [gdzie] najdalej położone punkty są jednakowo oddalone od środka’.<sup>110</sup>

As Donne notes: ‘One of the most convenient Hieroglyphicks of God, is a Circle, and a Circle is endlesse’.<sup>111</sup>

The Baroque brought a change in the artistic imagination when Kepler in *Astronomia Nova* writes that the orbits of planets do not form circles but ellipses instead.<sup>112</sup> The ellipse and hyperbola become then one of the most popular images in arts and literature. But in Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry the circle and the sphere are still embodiments of perfection and divinity. They are identified with the circular eternal endurance of nature. The earth is at the centre of the universe and seven planets (also the sun and the moon) circle around it. The mobile universe consists of mobile spheres to which heavenly bodies are bonded and rotate on a common axis. This constellation emits a sound of ‘the music of the spheres’ as Donne wrote,

‘Forward and backward rapt and whirled are  
According to the music of the spheres.’<sup>113</sup>

‘Having determined that motion was the cause of these sounds, the Pythagoreans stated that the celestial spheres, circling around the centre of the world, also produced sound by their motion. This sound was harmonious since the distance of the spheres creates a harmonious proportion’.<sup>114</sup>

The contrastive image - the earth which is contaminated by sin - illustrates the human sphere. Thus, the symphony of the universe is unattainable for humans’ ears. On earth, time is linear and remains synonymous with the earthly wandering which leads a human to death. By contrast, the soul reaches up along the vertical line which promises the vision of eternal life but also reminds the humans of their weakness and mortality. The perfect harmony of the cosmos is the opposite of the chaos of human existence. Sęp Szarzyński uses images of space to present the infinite nature of God. Anna Grudzień describes

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<sup>110</sup> My translation: ‘all other shapes enclosed within it, where the most distant points are equidistant from the centre’.

<sup>111</sup> Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, eds. *The Sermons of John Donne*, vol. X (Berkeley; Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1962) 304.

<sup>112</sup> Gustaw Rene Hocke, *Świat jako labirynt: Maniera i mania w sztuce europejskiej w latach 1520-1650 i współcześnie*, trans. Marek Szalsza (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz, terytoria, 2003) 228.

<sup>113</sup> See: Eustace Mandeville Wetenhall Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943) 97.

<sup>114</sup> Teresa Michałowska, ‘Kochanowskiego poetyka przestrzeni,’ *Pamiętnik Literacki*, z. 1 (1978): 78.

them as: 'He dwells in the fiery courts of the glorious firmament; his endless power rules the spheres, he gives light to the stars, covers the wind with fire, brings the elements into harmony. As we accompany Sęp Szarzyński's poetic voice in piercing the colossal universe, we become aware of the immeasurable power attributed to God. We realize how small we are in comparison with the divine infiniteness. If to observe the power of Sęp Szarzyński's God, our imagination has to wander in the immeasurable heavenly spheres'.<sup>115</sup>

Human beings in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry raise their heads to observe from their earthly perspective the motion of the stars above which is described as follows: 'bieg porządnie zgodny' (*course so concordant*), 'zgodne spory', 'porządek na wysokim niebie', 'rządne błędzenie'. The universe accordingly resembles a perfect machine:

W pewne godziny dzień – nocy cieniowi,  
W pewne godziny noc zstępując dniowi  
Świadczą swym biegiem tak porządnie zgodnym,  
Że nie trafunkiem świat stanął przygodnym.

Nieba machina, tak zgodnie sprawiona,  
Że mądrość Pańska, że moc nieskończona  
Wiecznie ją rządzi (...).

(*Pieśń I Pr*)

*'Day, at times fixed, to night's shadow ceding;  
Night, at times fixed, ceding unto the day,  
Thus do testify with course so concordant  
That 'twas no mere chance earth came to be.*

*The sky's mechanics, fashioned in accord,  
Proclaim 'tis God's wisdom, His endless might  
That ever sways them (...)'*

Human beings are surrounded by a harmonious and logical cosmos whose circular movement is reflected by the natural law on earth. The highest wisdom penetrates the cosmos and becomes part of the cycle of seasons and days. The individual placed in the centre of the universe can only cherish the beauty and perfection of the surrounding space:

'Kto się, gdy nieba chmura nie zakrywa,  
Patrząc na jasnych gwiazd blask, nie zdumiewa?

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<sup>115</sup> Grudzień 202.

Abo gdy światłem uderzy go w oczy  
Słońce, ognistym gdy się kołem toczy?’  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

*‘Who, when a cloud veils not the heavens,  
Looks unamazed on the stars' bright lustre?  
Or when the sun doth his eyes assail with  
Light, whilst reeling in its flaming arc?’*

The cosmos becomes synonymous with circular movement: ‘kołem toczy’ (*reeling in its flaming arc*), ‘Tytanowe koło’ and order (‘rządne błędzenie’, ‘bieg porządnie zgodny’). It is constant and perfect and in Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry its perfection is always emphasized by the contrast between the sphere of God and that of human beings. Sęp Szarzyński describes God using the following epithets: ‘nieskończony’ (*infinite*), ‘wieczny’ (*eternal*), ‘niezmierzony’ (*measureless*), and mankind’s life as ‘odmienne’ (*changeable*), ‘nędzne’ (*miserable*), ‘bojaźliwe’ (*fearful*). In opposition to eternity and the endurance of the cosmos is human existence which lasts no longer than one day and is only a shadow of the sun:

‘Z wstydem poczęty człowiek, urodzony  
Z boleścią, krótko tu na świecie żywie,  
I to odmiennie, nędznie, bojaźliwie,  
Ginie, od Słońca jak cień opuszczony.’  
(*Sonet II*)

*‘Man, shamedly sired, painfully  
Born, but a moment bides this earth,  
Aye, midst change, misery, fear;  
A shadow void of Sun, he dies.’*

The contrast between God and human beings is inevitable but paradoxically it is a part of human existence. Two worlds, which seem to be separated, coexist in Sęp Szarzyński’s poems by unifying contrasts. While heaven reminds one of imperfect human nature, earth’s chaos causes human beings to yearn for something true and eternal. The human being does not belong only to one reality: while the body is absolutely material and has its proper place on earth, the soul belongs to another world. That is why the human being unites features of both humanity and divinity. These two worlds (earth and the rest of the cosmos) penetrate one another and cannot exist without each other. Human life is highly determined by natural laws, for instance the movement of spheres affects the human world because it creates time on

earth. To understand this phenomenon in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry, a closer examination of *Sonet I* is helpful:

'Ehej, jak gwałtem obrotne obłoki  
I Tytan prętki lotne czasy pędzą,  
A chciwa może odciąć rozkosz nędzą  
Śmierć - tuż za nami spore czyni kroki!

A ja, co dalej, lepiej cień głęboki  
Błędów mych widzę, które gęsto jędzą  
Strwożone serce ustawiczną nędzą,  
I z płaczem ganię młodości mej skoki.

O moc, o rozkosz, o skarby pilności,  
Choćby nie darmo były, przedsie szkodzą,  
Bo naszą chciwość od swej szczęśliwości  
Własnej (co Bogiem zowiemy) odwodzą.

Niestale dobra! O, stokroć szczęśliwy,  
Który tych cieniów wczas zna kształt prawdziwy!

'Alas, hardpressed the whirling orbs  
And swift Titan hie fleeting hours,  
*And cleave delights with woe avid*  
*Death might - fast on us, she strides!*

*Whilst I, onward, mark more the deep*  
*Shadow of my wrongs that prey untold*  
*On a heart cowed now by constant woe,*  
*And with tears, my youthful faults I rue.*

*Power, delights, wealth, such ado,*  
*Tho ne'er for naught, 'tis ill they work,*  
*For our desire they turn astray*  
*From its rightful bliss (God we name).*

*Brief gains! O blissful a hundredfold*  
*Who knows quick these shadows' true shape!'*

The first two lines in particular have caused scholars many difficulties and have produced quite discrete interpretations. The discussion between Głombiowska<sup>116</sup> and Vincenz<sup>117</sup> in the mid-1970s was one of the most productive exchanges. The classic interpretations by J. Krzyżanowski, T. Sinko and J. Błoński had explained 'obłoki' as heavenly bodies, the spheres which – by their movement – were responsible for time passing. By contrast, Vincenz claimed that no documents

<sup>116</sup> See: Zofia Głombiowska, "Sonet I" Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego: obrona dawnej interpretacji,' *Pamiętnik Literacki* z. 1 (1978): 401-408.

<sup>117</sup> See: Andrzej Vincenz, "Sonet I" Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego: Próba ponownej lektury,' *Pamiętnik Literacki*, z. 4 (1976): 131-188.

of the Renaissance epoch include confirmation that the term ‘obłoki’ has a different meaning from ‘chmury’ (*clouds*). He also disagrees with Sinko who tries to prove that the word ‘obłok’ derives from ‘obląk’ (łuk – *arch*). However, there are no archives to confirm the alternations ‘ą’ → ‘o’ in position before ‘k’. Thus, Vincenz interprets ‘obłoki’ as ‘chmury’ (*clouds*) and ‘obrotne’ as ‘zmienne’ (*changeable*). ‘Czasy’ thus become the subject of the distich: ‘Niestety, Lotne czasy gnają jak niepowstrzymanie obracające się obłoki i prędkie Tytan’ (*Alas! The fleeting hours hie hardpressed as the whirling orbs and swift Titan*).

In 1978 in the article entitled *Sonet I Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego – obrona dawnej interpretacji* Z. Głombiowska defended the old interpretation of *Sonet I*. She cites the words of *Pieśń II* as confirmation of the meaning of ‘obłoki’ as heavenly spheres:

‘Opaczystym obłokom poczyniłeś tory,  
W których błdzić nie mogą, zgodne wiodąc spory;  
Pokazuje nam gwiazdy Tytanowe koło,  
W pewny czas rogi bierze Cyntyja na czoło.’

‘For errant spheres Thou hath set paths  
*Whereon, disputing in concert, they stray not;*  
*The arc of Titan plots for us the stars,*  
*And Cynthia's brow at times taketh horns;’*

The poem therefore reflects the image of God’s governance of the world, a vision of the cosmos. God governs the cosmos with its planets, stars, the moon and the sun, which is why He created paths for all the heavenly bodies. Clouds do not move along their paths as planets do – according to Sęp Szarzyński’s views. Głombiowska suggests that the poet probably uses the word ‘obłok’ due to its association with heaven. Also, the etymology of ‘obłok’ leads to the word ‘obwlec’ – otoczyć coś dookoła (*to envelop something*) in the way that spheres envelop the earth. ‘Obłok’ ought to be understood as a circle or a sphere. Continuing her argumentation, Głombiowska explains that the epithet ‘obrotne’ cannot signify something that is changeable (‘niestałe’, ‘zmienne’) because ‘czasy’ (*time*) moves constantly forward, thus cannot be compared to the clouds which move in different directions at different speeds depending on the strength of the wind.

If we accept Głombiowska’s theory, it helps us to understand how the process of *time* passing is represented by Sęp Szarzyński. The circling spheres cause the changes of seasons and periods of the day. The sun, the moon and the planets were used to measure the time. Sęp Szarzyński once more shows how deeply the sphere of

human existence is dependent on the cosmos and how strong the two worlds are bond together. Each of them exists according to its own laws as if there were no other world, however they belong to each other. The perfection of the cosmos is in stark contrast to the imperfection of the earth but human life is folded between them; existence on earth is permanently affected by the movement in the cosmos and in return, human beings become a part of the cosmos obeying its rules. Thus, the circling planets cause the lyrical subject to realize that the flow of time is inevitable and it is forced violently ('gwałtem') by their continuous movement. This interpretation supports Głombiowska's statement: 'Echaj, jak obrotne obłoki i predki Tytan gwałtem pędzą lotne czasy!' (Alas, as the whirling orbs and the swift Titan, hours hie hard pressed).

These attempts to find a single, unitary interpretation of the poem are nonetheless misguided in my view. Sęp Szarzyński's strategy deliberately creates difficulties in the text, thereby indicating a preference for multiplicity over poetic simplicity. A solution to the scholars' arguments, would be to combine the meaning of 'chmury' and 'obłoki' as metaphors of racing time. The clouds fold to infinity, they have no beginning and no end, their pleats change according to the wind and air movement. Consequently, the clouds are symbols of multiplicity and infinity while it is the planets that are responsible for creating time on earth. When we connect these metaphors, we see how the impression of speed is strengthened. Clouds are synonymous with infinity rather than the rapid movement, because they can also move slowly across the sky and their movement is not constant. That is why, in my opinion, the movement of clouds is only an additional, possibly second meaning of 'obłoki'. Only orbs, as proved previously, move constantly and the motion is their inner nature, their essence. Time is created from the 'outside', by the planets' movement, thus it passes by violently ('gwałtem') and the human being has to surrender to its rhythm and speed: 'According to the late Antiquity and medieval image of the world, the spheres were supposed to revolve slowly from West to East. Only due to the influence of the *Primum Mobile* whose motion was directed from East to West, did the heavens have to wander *per violentiam* at great speed in a direction contrary to their nature.'<sup>118</sup> The influence of Luis de Granada<sup>119</sup> and his

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<sup>118</sup> Grześkowiak, Karpiński and Mrowcewicz 22. Trans. John Bates.

<sup>119</sup> Luis of Granada (1504-1588) was a Spanish, Dominican preacher, ascetic theologian and writer.

*Zabawy duchowne* (*Granados spiritual and heavenly exercises*) may also be detected in *Sonet I*:

‘This mortal life of ours, which is no more than a small flock of wool, will be soon spun out, whilst the wheel is perpetually turning round with so swift a motion’.<sup>120</sup>

The highest level in the hierarchy of the universe is the ‘*coelum empyraeum*’ (Empyrean), filled with ether. It is the realm of God and due to its purity and perfection it is separated from the double-floor reality of the cosmos. Sęp Szarzyński calls it a ‘sklep ognisty’ (*fiery sphere*) and it becomes synonymous with the highest, purest, most perfect and eternal realm. It is beyond the reach of human beings and is accessible only to God, Angels, Mother Mary and the Saints. This level is situated above the sphere of eternal fire. The elements of air and fire filled all the sublunary space. The earth, being the heaviest and least perfect was surrounded by water, air and fire, in that order, according to their diminishing weight and increasing lightness.

‘Poznasz, że mądrym, że jest wiekuistym  
Pan, co ma pałac na sklepie ognistym,  
W którym zawiesił i wietrzne próżności  
I można wodę zniósł z ziemskiej ciężkości.’  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

*‘Know ye that ‘tis a wise Lord, an eternal  
Lord there with palace midst fiery vault,  
Whereon airy voids He’s fastened high  
And great waters freed of earth’s pondrance.’*

‘(...) A twej chwały dwór znaczy firmament ognisty.

Przeto, choć wszędy tyś jest, oczy me płaczliwe  
Tam podnoszę i serce tam wzdycha teskliwe; (...)’  
(*Pieśń VI*)

*‘(...) A fiery firmament tho marks Thy glory’s stead.*

*And tho Thou art in all, ‘tis there my teary eyes  
I lift, and there doth my longing heart sigh;’*

‘Ogniem wiatr przykrył, dzierżą ziemię wody,  
Różnym naturom kazał użyć zgody,

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<sup>120</sup> See: ‘*The Sinners’s Guide in Two Books*’:

[http://www.archive.org/stream/sinnersguideintw00luisuoft/sinnersguideintw00luisuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/sinnersguideintw00luisuoft/sinnersguideintw00luisuoft_djvu.txt), 24. 04. 2011.

Temż zwierz, ptaki, ryby, drzewa z zioły  
Trzyma żywioły.'

(*Pieśń III*)

*'Wind He cloaked in fire, waters hold the land;  
To natures so opposed, harmony He decreed;  
Within them beasts, fowl, fish, trees and plants  
Doth He sustain.'*

The poetic images of the universe emerging from the lines cited above are hierarchical and they demonstrate Sęp Szarzyński's vision of the cosmos. The universe is created by God, thereby wisdom and harmony permeate into each level of this perfect and logical arrangement of being. On earth all things and creatures enjoy their proper forms. The elementary and the celestial worlds coalesce into the harmonious whole and ingenious system of mutual dependencies. The heavenly bodies are souls or intelligences from which flows a purposive, rational influence upon the order of life below them. These intelligences are associated with the hierarchy of angels (they contribute to the belief in the influence of the stars upon the affairs of the mankind). Seraphs constituted the highest level of that hierarchy<sup>121</sup> which were angels burning with the fire of love. Cherubs, the second level, symbolized the pure love of God and possessed the inevitable wisdom of God. Sęp Szarzyński chooses to describe angels starting with the lower level of hierarchy:

*'Dziwne są twego miłosierdzia sprawy:  
Tym się Cherubim (przepaść rozumności)  
Dziwi zdumiały i stąd pała prawy  
Płomień, Serafim, w szczęśliwej miłości.'*

(*Sonet II*)

*'Strange these workings of Thy mercy:  
Cherubs (wisdom's vast gulf) in awe  
Do marvel, whilst Seraphs, flame  
Most true, in joyous love burn bright.'*

The human soul is simultaneously the highest of the forms that realize themselves in matter and the lowest of the pure intelligences. The three forces are in conflict within the human being: his/her will, the intellect and the vegetative constituent, that is the body. The human brain was also divided into three levels: the lowest being the five senses, the second - the fancy, and the third – the memory.

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<sup>121</sup> The rest: Troni, Dominationes, Virtutes, Potestates, Principes, Archangeli, Angeli.



Below human beings are further orders of being ('zwierz, ptaki, ryby, drzewa' – *animals, birds, fishes, trees*). The lowest entity possesses the vegetative soul, the first form of organic life ('the soul of growth') or the second ('the soul of motion and of sense'). In the human being these are conjoined with an intellectual faculty to form one soul, the soul 'of reason and understanding, an immortal soule' directly infused from God.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the unity of the entire cosmos is complete; the series of individual beings proceeds from the lowest to the highest forms of material existence, on past plant and animal life, through the human soul, with uninterrupted continuity over into the world of pure intelligences – the angels, and finally to the absolute Form - the deity. The cleft between the two worlds is thereby closed.<sup>123</sup>

Sęp Szarzyński presents the construction of the cosmos as a double-floor space (earth and heaven) which is divided into a ladder or the chain of being.<sup>124</sup> The first floor, above the moon is perfect and constant while the second floor, the sublunary space is subject to change and decay. Human life which is given on earth is separated from the world which the soul desires. It is remarkable that in the poetry of Sęp Szarzyński there is no space and hence no images defining hell: the earth becomes a symbol of humanity's ultimate fall. The earth is always described as 'niska' (*low*), ciężka (*heavy*) and 'skażona grzechem' (*contaminated by sin*). All movements on the earth are horizontal and lead towards death. Thus, heaven is symbolized by the upper floor and the earth correlates with the lower floor. There is always a tension between the two levels, however one cannot exist without the other, one reminds the human beings that they belong to another sphere. Human life becomes a fold between the two worlds, earth and heaven. As a result of the correspondence between the macrocosm and microcosm the human being's interior consists of two floors; it unites a sinful body and an immortal soul, the lower and the upper floor.

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<sup>122</sup> John Donne, *LXXX Sermons* quoted after Coffin 47.

<sup>123</sup> Coffin 48.

<sup>124</sup> The notion of 'the chain of being' is adapted from Pope's *Essay on Man* and appears in the work by Tillyard, op. cit.

## 2.3 The 'Two Floors' of the Human Being: Body and Soul

The *Baroque House* presented by Deleuze contains two levels. The one below is made of matter and its windows correspond to human senses which allow the perception of outside reality. The lower floor interferes with the material world, and belongs to it.

Robert Record in *The Castle of Knowledge* (1556) characterized the concept of corporeality created by four elements: '...these foure, that is, earth, water, ayre and fyre, are named the foure elements...the fyrste, symple and original matters, whereof all myxt and compoude bodies be made, and into whiche all shall retourne again...' <sup>125</sup> The image of the body made of elements, combined with the uncertainty of knowledge and the question of human capability to discover the true nature of things, is visible in Donne's *Of the Progresse of the Soule*:

'Thou art too narrow, wretch, to comprehend  
Even thy selfe; yea though thou wouldst but bend  
To know thy body. Have not all soules thought  
For many ages, that our body's wrought  
Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?' <sup>126</sup>

Sęp Szarzyński, unfamiliar with the new science and unaware of the questions posed by Donne, believed in the figure of 'four elements'. The old philosophy about the elements being the origin of material bodies can be found in *Sonet V*:

'Miłość jest własny bieg bycia naszego,  
Ale z żywiołów utworzone ciało  
To chwałąc, co zna początku równego,  
Zawodzi duszę, której wszystko mało,

Gdy ciebie, wiecznej i prawej piękności  
Samej nie widzi, celu swej miłości.'

*'Love's surely our being's just course,  
Aye, but 'tis flesh, from matter wrought,  
Praising what knows like inception,  
Guiles the soul, for which all's little*

<sup>125</sup> Robert Record, *The Castle of Knowledge* (1556) quoted after Coffin 160.

<sup>126</sup> John Donne, *Of the Progresse of the Soule. The Second Anniversarie*, in: *The Poems of John Donne*, vol. 2, ed. Robin Robbins (Harlow: Longman 2008) 410-462.

*If Thee, Beauty real and e'erlasting,  
It sees not, its love's true object.'*

The body unites four elements which co-exist in perfect harmony in the universe, however in the body there is no such concordance. Sęp Szarzyński emphasises the difference between both components: between material body and immortal soul. Additionally, he accentuates the fact that this division is ascribed only to the realm of the earth. The bodily constituents are consistently analogous to the mutable materials of the elementary sphere. They cannot escape the corruption to which nature is heir.<sup>127</sup> Tillyard cites C. Goodman: 'Though the present condition of man be earthly, made of earth, feeds on the earth, and therefore the soul doth less discover herself by her proper actions than doth the material body'.<sup>128</sup> Love which is a part of human life is not the love that the soul needs. Love is dialectical. One strain describes a desire for earthly goods and pleasures, while the other is pure love of God, a desire of the soul. However, when the body takes control of the soul, the human being cannot see the ultimate goal and beauty of his or her existence. Thus, the human 'blind' body cannot reach the transcendent boundary.

Bodiliness is also described through notions of conception, birth and passing, which belong only to the earthly life:

'Z wstydem poczęty człowiek, urodzony  
Z boleścią, krótko tu na świecie żywie,  
I to odmiennie, nędznie, bojaźliwie,  
Ginie od Słońca jak cień opuszczony.'  
(*Sonet II*)

*'Man, shamedly sired, painfully  
Born, but a moment bides this earth,  
Aye, midst change, misery, fear;  
A shadow void of Sun, he dies.'*

*'(...) Panie, twą chwałę, której nie naruszy  
Starość, co zębem stalnym wszystko kruszy.'*  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

*'(...) O Lord, and forms  
Thy true glory which age injures not,  
Whilst with steely tooth it crumbles all.'*

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<sup>127</sup> Coffin 164.

<sup>128</sup> Christopher Goodman, *The Fall of Man* (1616) quoted after Tillyard 71.

The first stanza of *Sonet II* describes in four verses the entirety of human life. It is divided into four stages: *a conception*, which is associated with shame, *a birth*, a symbol of pain, *life* which is short, changeable, full of fear and *death*, connected with desertion and loneliness. All these four stages reflect the passing of the human body, the impermanence of matter. Senility which destroys everything that is praised by the body shows the inconstancy of both the body and its desired objects. Eventually the body turns into ashes: ('Proch podnóżka twojego' - *Dust of Thy footstool, Pieśń II*; 'A daj, bym i tu baczył, iżem proch mizerny' - *Whilst here, grant me but mark I'm lowly dust, Pieśń V Pr*). The body is made of matter and into matter it will be turned. The passing of time and death are components of human lives and their materiality. In *Napis na statuę* Sęp Szarzyński writes that 'Wszystko, co się rodzi;/Bądź po ziemi chodź' (*Whatever's born,/Tho sod it tread*) is exposed to the actions of death. However, he never uses the images of mankind's journey into heaven. Even in the *Epitaphs* only once does Sęp Szarzyński mention 'the heaven's path': 'Wiem ja z twojej nauki, gdzie droga do nieba' (*From thy teaching I know where heaven's path lies - Pannie Zofiej Kostczance. Napis trzeci*) and eternal life:

'Wonie liliej pełen i czystości,  
I kwitnąć będzie prócz strachu zwiędłości.'  
(*Pannie Zofiej Kostczance... Napis pierwszy*)

'With Lily and purity, its fragrance brimming;  
And past fear of with'ring shall it blossom.'  
(*For Miss Sophia Kostczanka... First Inscription*)

The addressees are described through the grief of the relatives after their loss:

'Duchowieństwo, ubodzy, sieroty z wdowami,  
Jako po matce własnej zalali się łzami.  
Także i stan ważniejszy, i gmin pospolity  
Albo dali wzdychanie, albo płacz obfity.  
Dalekie, nieznajome też żałość strzeskała;  
Płakałby nieprzyjaciół, aleś go nie miała.'  
(*Na śmierć paniej wojewodzinej sandomierskiej... Napis pierwszy*)

'The priestly, poor, widows and orphans,  
As for a mother, in tears were all drowned;  
Both higher estate and common herd too,  
Their sighs or bountiful sobs did give;  
On the distant and strangers sorrow weighed hard;  
A foe might have wept, tho none didst thou have.'  
(*On the Death of the wife of the Voievod of Sandomierz...A First Inscription*)

The dead are depicted through the prism of their earthly life and virtues:

‘Skromność, hojność, układność, wspaniałość, pokora,  
Poważność, cnoty różne nie czyniły spora  
W tym cnym duchu’

(*Na śmierć paniej wojewodzinej  
sandomierskiej. Inszy tejże*)

‘Modesty, generosity, courtesy, beauty, humility,  
Dignity – virtues diverse had worked no discord  
In this fine spirit;’

(*On the Death of the wife of the  
Voievod of Sandomierz...Another to the Same*)

Their bodiliness on earth is more accentuated than their spirituality and the eternal happiness on the other side:

‘Zwyczaj, dom, urodę, kiedym była żywą,  
Kto znał moje, musiał mię sądzić za szczęśliwą.’

(*Pannie Zofiej Kostczance. Napis wtóry*)

‘Who knew of my wonts, house and count’nance  
Whilst I lived, had surely thought me content.’

(*For Miss Sophia Kostczanka...A Second Inscription*)

Thus, human beings, even after death, are seen in terms of their materiality even if they are identified with the poetic voice (in *Nagrobek Marcinowi Starzechowskiemu* and *Drugi temuż* as well as *Pannie Z. Kostczance. Napis wtóry* and *trzeci*). Their emotions do not contain reflections on being beyond the transcendent line, on the contrary they refer to earthly experiences. *The Epitaphs* illustrate that mankind’s thoughts go up to heaven while they live but it is impossible for human beings to rise along the vertical line. They cannot reach above and halt the horizontal movement that holds them down. An individual’s life becomes a fold between these two lines and two spaces while the soul is folded over the body. Consequently, there is not only one fold, but there is a variety of folds in the world, which constitute an infinite web of dependencies and multiplicity. As Deleuze states, ‘Bodies are not separated into parts of parts but are rather divided to infinity into smaller and smaller folds that always retain a certain cohesion’.<sup>129</sup> The nature of human beings unites the binary elements: material and spiritual; the material

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<sup>129</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold* 6.

constituent belongs 'down' in the earthly sphere, and the spiritual part belongs up in the celestial sphere; it corresponds to the upper level. However, the upper floor is closed as 'an interior without windows and without the outside', that is why it cannot act upon the body and restrain its fall:

'Ten nasz dom Ciało, dla zbiegłych lubości  
Niebacznie zajrzząc duchowi zwierzchności,  
Upaść na wieki żądać nie przestanie.'

(Sonet IV)

*'The flesh, our abode, for joys fleet,  
Eying heedless the spirit's lead,  
Stems not its wish for endless ruin.'*

The body is sinful and blind. On earth it becomes a domicile for the soul. But the metaphor of the house-body is oxymoronic as the soul does not find peace within the material body. House is not a home for Sęp Szarzyński's lyrical subject. On the contrary, this domicile feels like a prison.<sup>130</sup> The body that is subject to change and death is not a proper room for the soul. The law of gravity affects the body in a physical manner while the sins become the pull of the earth's gravity for the soul. The soul belongs to the sphere above but the body that moves along the horizontal line holds back the soul's ascent up to heaven. Furthermore, the human senses, which search for their fulfilment, constantly deceive the soul. The human interior becomes the battleground, a struggle against 'Satan, the world, the flesh':

'Pokój – szczęśliwość, ale bojowanie  
Byt nasz podniebny. On srogi ciemności  
Hetman i świata łakome marności  
O nasze pilno czynią zepsowanie.'

*'Peace be bliss, yet battle's strife  
'Tis our worldly run. A grim Hetman  
Of shadows and earth's sweet vanities  
Strive mindful toward our destruction.'*

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<sup>130</sup> Anna Grudzień's comments on the body in ancient philosophy: 'Plato insisted, by way of Socrates, that the body was a prison to the soul preventing man from getting glimpses of the truth. The Stoics regarded the body as inferior to the soul. Seneca taught that the body was the soul's cloak and he expected a sensible man to divorce his soul from his body. Epictetus described man as a poor soul laden with a lifeless body. Marcus Aurelius similarly claimed that man was filled with matter and rotteness and the body was a corpse'. Grudzień 127.

‘(...) gdy żądzą zwiedzione  
Myśli cukrują nazbyt rzeczy one,  
Które i mienić, i **muszą się psować.**’

‘(...) if by lust misled,  
Thoughts too sweetly gaze on things  
That perforce **must change and decay.**’

‘(...) ciało zaślepione  
I żądzą próżną, sprośną, szkodną napelnione;  
Niech się wstyda, że pragnie duszy swej panować:  
Słuszniej wiecznej ma służyć, co **się musi psować** (...)’  
(Sonet IV, Sonet V, Pieśń V Pr)

‘(...) the blind flesh  
So laden with vain, lowly, ill-working lust;  
For shame it seeks sway o'er its own soul:  
Fairer if **what's to decay** serves what's forever!’

The words ‘zepsowanie’ (*destruction*) and ‘psować się’ (*to decay*) characterize the attributes of all material bodies. Matter has contrastive features: it is both the beautiful façade and a tendency towards change and decay. Material goods accessible to people on earth are simultaneously tempting and deceitful. The imperfect senses surrender to the illusion of the temporary sweetness of things which ‘i mienić, i muszą się psować’ (*perforce must change and decay*). The words ‘muszą’, ‘musi się’ (*perforce must*) indicate the inconstant condition of things; change is their nature, the inevitable consequence of being made of matter. Sęp Szarzyński emphasizes the opposition between immortality of the soul and mutability of the body (‘słuszniej wiecznej ma służyć, co się musi psować’). The soul, which is imprisoned inside the blind body (‘ciało zaślepione’) cannot take control over it. The body is not the soul’s servant, on the contrary – the soul is dominated by the body’s greed and vanity. The key terms of Ecclesiastes *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas* reflect perfectly the nature of earthly goods which seem to be completely worthless and cause only mankind’s decline. A. Komaromi claims that the lyrical voice opposes the soul and body, but this opposition does not provide a stepping stone out of the aporia of human desire. The ambiguous syntax of the last line of *Sonet V* also confounds the opposition of the two: it is not entirely clear whether the ‘goal of its love’ refers to the body or the soul. Furthermore, the ‘leading astray’ of the soul by the body may constitute less a conflict between irreconcilably

different entities than an uncomfortable union of the two under a rational consciousness that cannot admit satisfaction through either type of love.<sup>131</sup>

Sęp Szarzyński uses verbs linked with food: 'cukrują' and 'smakują' (*Sonet V*) when defining the body's need for earthly pleasures which can be compared to the 'greediness for sweet things'. The adjective 'łakome' further emphasizes the deceptive beauty of things which misleads human senses. Thus, 'gold, fame, sceptre, delights and false beauty' cannot satisfy the human soul and furthermore, they do not soothe the fear and insecurity which humans feel when they face eternity:

'Komu tak będzie dostatkiem smakować  
Złoto, scepter, sława, rozkosz, i stworzone  
Piękne oblicze, by tym nasyczone  
I mógł mieć serce, i trwóg się warować?'  
(*Sonet V*)

*'Who's the man could savour his fill  
Of gold, fame, sceptre, delights, false  
Count'nance fair, that a heart he'd  
Have sated and all cares might allay?'*

'O moc, o rozkosz, o skarby pilności,  
Choćby nie darmo były, przedsie szkodzą,  
Bo naszą chciwość od swej szczęśliwości  
Własnej (co Bogiem zowiemy) odwodzą.'  
(*Sonet I*)

*'Power, delights, wealth, such ado,  
Tho ne'er for naught, 'tis ill they work,  
For our desire they turn astray  
From its rightful bliss (God we name).'*

In the latter poem Sęp Szarzyński sets up a paradox based on the inconstancy of all earthly things. Worldly objects of desire: power ('moc'), delights ('rozkosz') and wealth ('skarby') inspire human striving, but the certain knowledge of time's destructive course threatens desire with impending loss. The desire for 'inconstant goods' as Komaromi notes, is a paradox itself because what is 'good' must be good in its entirety, i.e constantly good, or else it does not fulfil the requirements of being good.<sup>132</sup> Human desires cause harm ('szkodzą') as they awaken greed and blind

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<sup>131</sup> Komaromi 127.

<sup>132</sup> Komaromi 125.



humans to true happiness ('naszę chciwość od swej szczęśliwości własnej odwodzą').

'Niestale dobra! O, stokroć szczęśliwy,  
Który tych cieniów wczas zna kształt prawdziwy!'  
(*Sonet I*)

*'Brief gains! O blissful a hundredfold  
Who knows quick these shadows' true shape!'*

Yet another paradox appears in this line: the comparison of earthly goods to shadows. A shadow is inconstant and changes depending on the position of the earth in relation to the sun, and even though sometimes it is not visible and disappears for a while, it is a permanent attribute of all material objects. Thus, 'inconstant goods' belong to human life in the same way as the shadow to its object. There is no escapeing the shadow. Hence, the human being can neither evade his/her shadow, nor the 'earthly goods' which are part of his/her existence. The temptation of material things brings pleasure to the body but simultaneously fails to satisfy the soul. What is perceptible by human senses as 'good', simultaneously becomes a shadow for the soul and the shadow is therefore often a metaphor for sin in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry.<sup>133</sup> The soul bears the sins of the body like shadows from which it cannot escape. Paradoxically, the shadow which is associated with 'heaviness' is described by the epithet 'ciężki' (*heavy*). Hence, the image of 'heavy shadow' contains two connotations: the first that sin is an inherent part of life and the second – the heaviness of 'horrible sins' illustrates its calamitous consequences for the soul:

'(...) na nas grzech straszliwy  
Przywodzi smutnej nocy ciężkie cienie!'  
(*Sonet III*)

*'(...) as vile sin bears on us  
Sorry night's ponderous shadows!'*

'The deep shadow of errors' is heavy and causes the soul's fall, hence human life is compared to a 'sad night'<sup>134</sup>. Personification of the word 'night' emphasises

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<sup>133</sup> The opposition between the light and the shadow will be covered in *Part III* of this thesis.

<sup>134</sup> See: John Donne, *Holy Sonnets: Sonnet V*:

*'(...) But black sin hath betray'd to endless night (...)'*,  
<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/holysonnet5.php>, 07. 04. 2010.

the suffering of the poetic voice and furthermore shows the state of infinite darkness which fills existence. As the shadows cannot be seen in the night, Sęp Szarzyński accumulates the words associated with darkness in order to present the paradox and hopelessness of the human being's condition. The blackness is a space which lacks the life-giving light. The imperfect senses cannot see the light of God, they only see the shadows. On earth mankind is surrounded only by shadows and darkness:

‘A my, na twoje sprawy choć wzrok ciemny mamy,  
(...) chociaż nas oświecasz, żywiemy jak w nocy.’  
(*Pieśń I*)

*‘And we, tho our vision be dark to Thy ways,  
Whence, tho Thy light strike on us, in night we abide.’*

That is why in *Pieśń I* Sęp Szarzyński addresses the apostrophe to God and pleads for light:

‘Obacz, a zmysły wždy oświeć zaćmione!’  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

‘Look up - and make bright your dimlit minds!’

‘To look’ does not mean ‘to see’ when the senses are not capable of recognizing a ‘true shape of shadows’ and separate the illusions from the essence of being. It is significant that both epithets ‘zaćmione [zmysły]’ and ‘zaślepione [ciało]’ begin with the prefix ‘za-’. In the first case, the prefix indicates that there is something that does not allow humankind to see the other thing; ‘zaślepione’ means ‘misled’ rather than ‘blind’. The adjective ‘blind’ signifies poor sight, however, in Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry the eyes can see well but not what they should see:

‘(...) z żywiołów utworzone ciało (...)  
Zawodzi duszę, której wszystko mało,  
Gdy ciebie, wiecznej i prawej piękności  
Samej nie widzi, celu swej miłości.’  
(*Sonet V*)

*‘(...) 'tis flesh, from matter wrought (...)  
Guiles the soul, for which all's little*

*If Thee, Beauty real and e'erlasting,  
It sees not, its love's true object.’*

All human actions go astray and turn into shadows which follow the human being as long as he/she lives. The longer existence lasts, the longer the shadow cast by human errors:

‘A ja, co dalej, lepiej cień głęboki  
Błędów mych widzę (...)’  
(*Sonet I*)

*‘Whilst I, onward, mark more the deep  
Shadow of my wrongs that prey untold (...)’*

The human being is not capable of recognizing right from wrong and always chooses the wrong path if follows his/her mind and senses ‘for what healthy seems, doth work greatest harm’ (*Song VIII*).

Even virtue in Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry is not enough to save the human being from the fall. In the *Oratore* Cicero declared that a man’s greatness lay not in gifts of fortune but in the virtuous use of them. Viewed from this angle, virtue was a proper course for the wise man to pursue. It was also a way of avoiding the snares of fortune.<sup>135</sup> Although Sęp Szarzyński praises a virtue (for instance *Sonet VI*, *Pieśń V*, *Pieśń VIII*), in *Pieśń IX* he states: ‘stalna cnota, wątłe tamy na powódź zaćmionej Bogini!’ (*thy supposed steely virtue, But frail dams to the blind goddess’ torrent!*). Neither virtue nor wisdom are able to save the ‘poor soul’.

From Sęp Szarzyński’s poems the image of humankind which emerges is that of a lost and blind human being, imprisoned by the sinful body and his/her own fears. The senses can only see the shadows and as in Plato’s cave, they are incapable of knowing the true meaning of reality. In the double-floor structure of human existence, the soul cannot take control of the body in order to reveal the delusive shadow of material things. That is why the lyrical subject of Sęp Szarzyński’s poems addresses many apostrophes to God pleading for help and consolation.

‘Ciebie, wszego stworzenia o obrońco wieczny,  
Wzywam, wątły, ubogi i nigdzie bezpieczny:  
Miej mię w pilnej opiece, a we wszystkiej trwodze  
Pośpiesz przynieść ratunek duszy mej niebodze.’  
(*Pieśń V Pr*)

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<sup>135</sup> John Stephens, *The Italian Renaissance: the origins of intellectual and artistic change before the Reformation* (London: Longman, 1990) 40.

*'To Thee, eternal Defender of all creation,  
I call, frail, commiserate, nowhere secure.  
Keep me in close watch, and in my each anxiety,  
Hasten to bring aid to my wretched soul.'*

In this stanza, Sęp Szarzyński accentuates the weakness of the human body. Mankind belongs to the category of creatures made of matter ('wsze stworzenie'), whose corporeality leads to a state of being frail, commiserative and insecure. The human being needs God's help, protection and guardianship for both his/her weak body but above all, for his/her wretched soul.

The human body is imperfect but made of these four elements which in the cosmos unite in the perfect harmony. There is a *discordia concors* (discordant concordance) in the cosmos and there is a correspondence of this phenomenon in the microcosm. To illustrate this dependence, Maravall quotes Montaigne: 'Like the harmony of the universe, our life is composed of contrary things' and Suarez de Figueroa: 'The human being is a force that comes to be maintained by a discordant concordance, just as everything that has movement on the universal globe'.<sup>136</sup> Gracian similarly wrote that 'this entire Universe is composed of contraries and is harmonized by disharmonies'.<sup>137</sup>

Deleuze constructs the *Baroque House* to show dependences and multiplicity in the world. He chose to investigate the philosophy of Leibniz who developed a metaphysics that presented the universe as the composite of an infinite number of monads which exist in harmony. According to this philosophy each monad is like a microcosm and reflects the entire universe. In Sęp Szarzyński's poetry the celestial world seems to be opposed to the earthly life. However, the deadlock lies in the awareness that human beings belong to the perfect universe but their sins exclude them from this sensibly and beautifully organised structure. Therefore their condition and their place in the cosmos can be explained by understanding a human being's complex nature. Consequently, more folds occur on a further level: within humankind's interior.

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<sup>136</sup> Maravall 157.

<sup>137</sup> Maravall 158.

*Part 3*  
*A Labyrinth*  
*- the Fold Between the Two Folds*

*3.1 The Topos of the Labyrinth as an Interpretive Tool*

The motif of the labyrinth in this study is used to illustrate the multiplicity and aporia in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry. My aim is to develop the idea that the folds in Sęp Szarzyński's poems exist on many different levels; as in the labyrinth, there are links between human life and death or Fortune, between microcosm and macrocosm, between body and soul and in an analogical sense, there exist infinite folds inside human beings' souls and minds. These folds can be divided into further folds which results in the building of a complex continuity, a fluidity of reality. A. Badiou's assertion that 'The fold is the concept of the multiple, a representation of the multiple as a labyrinthine complexity'<sup>138</sup> means that different paths do not lead to a particular point, but cross instead and go into infinity. According to Deleuze: 'The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold, not the point, which is never a part, but only an extremity of the line (...)'.<sup>139</sup> What is more, 'the labyrinth of continuity is not a line which would dissolve into independent points, like sand flowing in grains, but is like a piece of fabric or a sheet of paper which divides into an infinite number of folds or disintegrates into curved movements, each one determined by the consistency or the participation of its setting'.<sup>140</sup>

Thus, labyrinths are embodiments of multiple dependencies and relations between phenomena. Deleuze maintains: 'A labyrinth is said, etymologically, to be multiple because it contains many folds. The multiple is not only what has many parts but also what is folded in many ways'.<sup>141</sup> This approach investigates not only the different paths of Sęp Szarzyński's thoughts but also how they are united and how they present one image of the world that is folded in many ways. In previous parts I presented an analogical correspondence between the human being and the

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<sup>138</sup> Alain Badiou, 'Review of Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*,' in: *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York; London: Routledge, 1994) 52.

<sup>139</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold* 6.

<sup>140</sup> Deleuze and Strauss 231.

<sup>141</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold* 3.

surrounding universe. In this chapter I shall introduce the folds in the human interior. Deleuze further claims: 'A labyrinth corresponds exactly to each level: the continuous labyrinth in matter and its parts, the labyrinth of freedom in the soul and its predicates?'.<sup>142</sup> 'There is a correspondence between the two levels, between the two labyrinths, between the coils of matter and the folds in the soul. A fold between the two folds'.<sup>143</sup>

Many Polish scholars, including Błoński<sup>144</sup> and Mrowcewicz<sup>145</sup> emphasise the difficulty of Sęp Szarzyński's poetry. However, the motif of the labyrinth has never been used as the interpretive tool for Sęp Szarzyński's poems. Is this due to the fact that Sęp Szarzyński does not mention the word 'labyrinth' in his poems? Or is it perhaps due to the fact that the Polish discourse on Sęp Szarzyński is so strongly rooted in the tradition of being 'contrastive', 'opposite', 'binary' that scholars prefer to see his poetry as a collection of mutually exclusive components rather than a multicursal labyrinth? By contrast, this chapter will present how the oppositions cross, how the motifs coexist and are folded in many ways. My aim is to use the implications of the labyrinth in order to show the aporia of a human being's life presented in the poetry of Sęp Szarzyński. According to Paolo Santarcangeli<sup>146</sup> the labyrinth reflects 'harmonia discors' – the geometrical, well-considered construction in which, paradoxically, human reason is lost. In my interpretation, Sęp Szarzyński's works form a kind of 'harmonia discors'. The labyrinthine problems of God's grace and human nature, of freedom and free will do not exclude one another but on the contrary, coexist and offer a multiplicity of choices. The labyrinth consists of a series of choices among different possibilities.<sup>147</sup> In this poetry there are no overt links to the Cretan myth, however the motif of the labyrinth is perceptible in the poetic imagination and on the rhetorical level. And although the word 'labyrinth' does not appear throughout the volume of *Rytmy*, it becomes a symbol of human existence, of the soul and world's image seen from the earthly perspective. As David Kenosian notes, 'the motif of the labyrinth provides the reader with vital information about the

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<sup>142</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold* 3.

<sup>143</sup> Deleuze and Strauss 229.

<sup>144</sup> See: Błoński, op. cit.

<sup>145</sup> See: Mrowcewicz, *Czemu*.

<sup>146</sup> Paolo Santarcangeli, *Księga labiryntu*, trans. Ignacy Bukowski (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982) 96.

<sup>147</sup> David Kenosian, 'Puzzles of the Body: The Labyrinth in Kafka's *Prozeß*, Hesse's *Steppenwolf* and Mann's *Zauberberg*,' *Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature* (New York: P. Lang, 1995) 18

relationship of the individual to the world (...) and the ability of questers to find their way in that world'.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Kenosian 10.

## 1.2 The World as Labyrinth<sup>149</sup>

‘Hunc mundum tipice laberinthus denotat iste  
Intranti largus, redeunte set nimis artus  
Sic mundo captus viciorum mole gravatus  
Vix valet ad vite doctrinam quisque redire’.<sup>150</sup>

From ancient times the labyrinth has been a metaphor for the long way that leads to the centre and consequently, to perfection. Gustav Rene Hocke in the study entitled *Die Welt als Labyrinth – Manier und Manie in der europäischen Kunst* explores the idea of the labyrinth to the field of the arts. He argues that it reaches full bloom in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century in all areas of life – from labyrinthine gardens and architecture to literature. The English word ‘maze’ means also ‘to astonish, to confuse, and ‘a stupor’, thus the labyrinth signifies something confusing and incomprehensible. Hocke cites Henry King, who in a poem from 1627 writes: ‘The crooked labyrinth is life, it is although sin’ and quotes Comenius’ work from 1631, *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*, which illustrates a difficult way to the ultimate truth, the light of God.<sup>151</sup> The motif of the labyrinth is presented in Bartolomeo Veneto’s *Portrait of a Man* (1510), Tintoretto’s painting at Hampton Court Palace and in *Pleasure garden with a maze* (c. 1579-84) by Lodovico Pozzoserrato after Tintoretto. In the field of literature, Matthews<sup>152</sup> mentions the following writers: G. Fletcher’s *A Lover’s Maze* from 1593, Thomas Carwell (*alias* Thorold) and his *Labyrinthus Cantuarensis* published in 1658, and the French poet hidden behind initials ‘H. F. S. D. C.’ who wrote a suite of poems entitled *Le Labyrinthe d’Amour* published in 1611. One of the most important books on gardening written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (first edition 1563) by Didymus Mountaine (Thomas Hill) was entitled (in later editions) *The Gardener’s Labyrinth*. Although it is simply a vade mecum for a gardener, the title proves the motif’s popularity at the

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<sup>149</sup> The chapter’s title is inspired by Hocke, op. cit.

<sup>150</sup> The quotation from the church of San Savino at Piacenza dated by P. M. Carpi under the year A.D. 903 in "Ecclesiastical History of Piacenza" (1651) says: The labyrinth represents the world we live in, broad at the entrance, but narrow at the exit, so that he who is ensnared of the joys of this world and weighed down by his vices, can regain the doctrine of life only with difficulty. William Henry Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths: a general account of their history and developments* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922) 57.

<sup>151</sup> Hocke 171.

<sup>152</sup> Matthews 195-196.



time. The images of the labyrinth take on different, figurative forms in the metaphysical poetry of George Herbert, Richard Crashaw and Andrew Marvell.

Santarcangeli claims that the labyrinthine imagination of the Baroque was a reflection of the tragic uncertainty of the world and of mankind. 'The most difficult problem for modern humanity was the possibility of choices, while the one road is wrong and the second one is right'.<sup>153</sup> This interpretation seems to be also the key for Maravall's work on the Baroque where he states that 'the labyrinth expresse the situation of a profoundly disrupted society'.<sup>154</sup> The motif of the labyrinth takes different forms and meanings. Sometimes it expresses the way leading to a discovery of a self, at other times it may illustrate the movement of heavenly spheres or God's incomprehensible actions while the Ariadne's thread means the cycle of the seasons and changes of nature. The labyrinth is also a metaphor for literature, for instance in Jan Kochanowski's *Do fraszek*.<sup>155</sup> David Kenosian cites the poem of Lohenstein, a 17th-century Silesian playwright and poet who compares the human brain to a maze.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, the labyrinth can be a kind of game with a reader who is required to solve a riddle.<sup>157</sup> In the poem of Dylan Thomas cited below, the labyrinth is linked to the idea of time which is expressed in the graphic shape of a clock or an hour-glass:

'And we have come  
To know all  
Places  
Ways  
Mazes  
Passages  
Quarters and graves  
Of the endless fall',<sup>158</sup>

But the invention of the graphic labyrinth is not attributable to 20<sup>th</sup>-century poets. In one of columns of Pompeii we read:

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<sup>153</sup> Elżbieta Rybicka, *Formy labiryntu w prozie polskiej XX wieku* (Kraków: Universitas, 2000) 21.

<sup>154</sup> Maravall 153.

<sup>155</sup> Jan Kochanowski, *Do fraszek*. Księgi Trzecie, originally published in [1584].

<sup>156</sup> Kenosian 16.

<sup>157</sup> Rybicka 18.

<sup>158</sup> Hocke 174.

SATOR  
AREPO  
TENET  
OPERA  
ROTAS

Michael Ayrton explains that ‘it is a curious maze of words, for it can be read palindromically – that is to say in any direction across, upwards or downwards. It hides inside it the letters of Pater Noster if these words are put in the form of an equally armed cross with the A and the O – alpha and omega (the Apocalyptic Names of God) suspended and mirrored above and below the horizontal arms. There may also be a mirror – which is a maze extension – in the second word AREPO which may be no more than a mirror-image of the word OPERA; though it may, it seems, be an ancient Celtic word for ”plough”’.<sup>159</sup>

Umberto Eco defines three types of labyrinths. The first one is *linear* and all its paths lead to the centre where Minotaur lives. It is impossible to be lost in this space which is ruled by blind necessity.<sup>160</sup> The second, manneristic type is called a maze. It is multicursal and its construction can be compared to a tree which produces new branches. Some of them point to a way out while others are dead ends. There is no Minotaur inside as this kind of labyrinth is a danger itself hidden within its interior. The third type is a net. It is an unlimited territory, different than a tree and contains neither a centre nor an outside.<sup>161</sup> Deleuze and Guattari characterised this type of labyrinth as a rhizome and labelled it as a ‘multiplicity’.<sup>162</sup>

The motif of the labyrinth reflects the relationship between space and time, between physical matter and its metaphorical meaning. According to Schopenhauer all entities in the phenomenal world are manifestations of the will in space and time.<sup>163</sup> A labyrinth is a space which influences a human being’s behaviour; the entry into the labyrinth causes particular reactions, the labyrinth is not only a witness but also an impulse for human actions. Thus, a labyrinth is not only a physical, empirical space, but mostly a symbolic space, where the folds of choices run into infinity and

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<sup>159</sup> Michael Ayrton, *A Meaning to the Maze* (Abington: Abbey Press [Oxon], 1974) 18.

<sup>160</sup> See: Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of the Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984) 80-81.

<sup>161</sup> Eco 81.

<sup>162</sup> The notion of ‘rhizome’ appeared first in Deleuze’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. See also: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, ‘Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,’ in: *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 30 (Minneapolis; Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, c.1986).

<sup>163</sup> Kenosian 4.

where the human being searches for epistemological answers. A labyrinth is a space of movement, of erring, wandering and pilgrimage. The human being who finds himself/herself inside the labyrinth cannot stay still, movement is a condition of existence within this space. The labyrinth represents a challenge of orientation to those who enter. They must successfully orient themselves in a confusing space. They frequently face choices at crossroads. In the variety of paths and intersections, there is a possibility of error.<sup>164</sup>

The maze is a reflection of the human condition and becomes a map of the journey through life, through a labyrinth of circumstance, ambition, hope, achievement, failure, frustration and faith into death and hence into resurrection. The latter two take place in the centre – this centre is at once death and rebirth to the individual pilgrim.<sup>165</sup> I will now focus on these different aspects of the labyrinth in Sęp Szarzyński's oeuvre.

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<sup>164</sup> Kenosian 10.

<sup>165</sup> Ayrton 16.

### 3.3 Labyrinthine Images in Sęp Szarzyński's Poetry

‘Mając umysł stateczny czynić, co należy,  
Niech moja łódź, gdzie pędzi wola Boża, bieży  
I przy brzegu, który mi Bóg naznaczył, stanie,  
Jeśli nie jest bezportne ludzkie żeglowanie.

Co na świecie, chyba błąd? kłopoty? marności?  
Imię tylko Pokoju snadź i Szczęśliwości,  
Którą widzi, a nie zna duch, chciwy lepszego,  
Będąc jakmiarz związany od służki swojego.

Sława smaczna, rozkoszy, władza, siła złota,  
Drugdy twa, Zeno twardy, słowem stalna cnota,  
Wątle tamy na powódź zaćmionej Bogini!  
Lecz ta niech zwyczaj zmieni; śmierć folgi nie czyni.

Więc co tam spokojnego, gdzie burza ustawna?  
Przeto woli mej rada (rządzić się nie sprawna),  
Chętne żagle rozwiła ku twej, Panie, chwale,  
Ty mię wieź, Ty sturuj sam; tak skończę bieg w całe.’  
(Pieśń IX)

*‘Having stable mind to do what is right,  
Let my vessel then race where God's will plies,  
And on the shore God hath assigned me, stop,  
If mankind's sailing be not without port.*

*What's earth but error? travails? vanities?  
Peace, a mere name; so too Contentment  
The spirit sees yet, craving more, knows not,  
As if to its own servant 'twere bound.*

*Sweet fame, power, delights, gold aplenty,  
Once, stern Zeno, thy supposed steely virtue,  
But frail dams to the blind goddess' torrent!  
And should habit she change, death tarries not.*

*So what talk of peace where a storm's incessant?  
My will's resolve then (unfit to guide itself)  
Eager sails to thy glory doth unfurl, O Lord;  
Lead me, steer alone, so intact I'd end my course.’*

In accordance with the poetic image of the labyrinth, Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński describes human life as wandering and erring (‘Co na świecie, chyba błąd? kłopoty? marności?’ – *What's earth but error? travails? vanities?*). Sęp Szarzyński uses the topos of *peregrinatio vitae* to describe human lives. The motif takes different forms depending on the reason for and purpose of the journey. The metaphysical realisation

of the topos characterises life as a pilgrimage. Hence, the topos of *peregrinatio vitae* is linked to the motif of the labyrinth. Both are devices to illustrate how the human being seeks the truth and reason in one's life. Existence in *Pieśń IX* is compared to a boat, which does not sail to a certain harbour, on the contrary – it does not know its destination. The poetic voice searches for directions but the final port will be created by God at the end of the journey. The shore to which the boat sails is unknown, delimited by God ('I przy brzegu, który mi Bóg naznaczył, stanie' – *And on the shore God hath assigned me, stop*). However, there is a question mark about whether the harbour exists ('jeśli nie jest bezportne ludzkie żeglowanie' – *If mankind's sailing be not without port*). This is the only point in Sęp Szarzyński's poems where faith seems to be put to the test. Sęp Szarzyński's doubts can be considered as an ideological crisis. It strengthens the fact that in the labyrinthine space the question about the sense, the meaning, the goal of life is always present. The sailing is rough and violent, the human being is in a state of motion ('moja łódź bieży' – *let my vessel then race*) as the course is not determined by God but by the goddess Fortune, who inflicts the floods and storms upon humankind. The individual is helpless and lost on this journey – being in motion, he/she is additionally subjected to the fight between body and soul ('duch, chciwy lepszego, Będąc jakmiarz związany od sługi swojego' – *spirit sees yet, craving more, knows not, As if to its own servant twere bound*) which put him/her at the crossroads where he/she must make a choice. The treasures of the wordly life such as 'sweet fame, power, delights, gold aplenty' and even 'steely virtue' and reason do not show the way out of the labyrinth and do not bring consolation to the confused individual. The reason and will upon humankind is too weak to make a right choice, free will obscures human senses with greed and makes the way to the centre of the labyrinth more difficult. Thus, the lyrical subject manifests submission to God ('Przeto woli mej rada (rządzić się nie sprawna), Chętnie żagle rozwiła ku Twej, Panie, chwale' – *My will's resolve then (unfit to guide itself) Eager sails to thy glory doth unfurl*). Finally, the human being pleads for help and addresses his prayers to God hoping that He will lead him/her to a safe harbour when the journey is over ('Ty mię wieź, Ty sturuj sam; tak skończę bieg w cale' – *Lead me, steer alone, so intact I'd end my course*).

The world presented by Sęp Szarzyński is reminiscent of a web of corridors within the labyrinth, there is no way out, the space is closed and mysterious, incomprehensible to human beings. Thus, it is a synonym of human existence. It

becomes a metaphor of mankind's relationship with the world, to others and also to the inner self. The wandering through the labyrinth is equivalent to the wandering through life. The space of the labyrinth is always the same: it is impenetrable and consequently hostile and strange. It cannot be controlled or adapted to human purposes. A labyrinth cannot be domesticated. In this respect the world becomes for Sęp Szarzyński a labyrinth which does not feel like home and the human being is only a guest, a 'guest in the universe'.<sup>166</sup> The individual is alienated, confused and lonely. He/she attempts to find a way out and seeks a sign that would help him/her escape this unfriendly space. The lyrical voice of Sęp Szarzyński's poems raises up its head and waits for mercy from God. But God remains silent, distant and unreachable. Hence, the human being strays through life trying to understand his/her plight.

The myth of the labyrinth is described by Michał Głowiński as the 'myth of discovery',<sup>167</sup> because the individuals who are going through the labyrinth simultaneously discover what is hidden within themselves, try to understand their psyche, fight their fears, seek answers even though it is known that their situation is hopeless. Similarly, the poetic voice in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry realizes the helplessness of his/her position, that is why the apostrophe is addressed to God:

‘Ciebie, wszego stworzenia o obrońco wieczny,  
Wzywam, wątły, ubogi i nigdzie bezpieczny:  
Miej mię w pilnej opiece, a we wszystkiej trwodze  
Pośpiesz przynieść ratunek duszy mej, niebodze.’  
(Pieśń V Pr)

‘To Thee, eternal Defender of all creation,  
I call, frail, commiserate, nowhere secure.  
Keep me in close watch, and in my each anxiety,  
Hasten to bring aid to my wretched soul.’

There is no answer to the prayers because a labyrinth disentangled is no longer a labyrinth. The human being formulates the questions, searches for the answers while he/she knows there is no way out of the labyrinth. The attempt to cross the boundary, to escape the hostile space is undone since in Sęp Szarzyński's poems there is no exit, no peaceful place in the whole world. The closed space of the

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<sup>166</sup> Błoński 37.

<sup>167</sup> See: Michał Głowiński, *Mity przebrane: Dionizos, Narcyz, Prometeusz, Marcholt, labirynt* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994).

earth is the second level of a double-floor reality and above the earth the open space of heaven appears, however they are two separate spaces. That is why the human being, lost in the labyrinth of the world, which becomes a prison, searches for help from above. Moreover, mankind is locked in a double prison – one is the world, the other – their own body. Also the sins and desires of human beings put them deeper and deeper into the labyrinth. Rybicka argues that ‘the labyrinth is a prison without walls, or at least without boundaries, which restrains not by lack of space but rather by its redundancy. The concept of space and time within the labyrinth is particularly interesting. Space is extended, time multiplies by repeating the same images: the microscopic human being erring among the paths. Space and time cause dispersion of self-identity, the human being is broken, reduced to atoms, erring’.<sup>168</sup> Hence the contrast with the open space of the cosmos is emphasized even more starkly. There is no possibility to escape the labyrinth but the human subject of Sęp Szarzyński’s poems fights and hopes for the ultimate victory when death comes:

‘Ty mnie przy sobie postaw, a przepiecznie  
Będę wojował i wygram statecznie!’  
(Sonet IV)

*‘Closeby Thee place me, and secure  
Then I’d I war, soundly would I win!’*

The belief in the ultimate triumph over the world and its temptations correlates to the symbolic meaning of the centre of the labyrinth which is considered a space of spiritual rebirth. The labyrinth, just like human life, is full of traps and corners which delay the redemption of the soul. The centre of the labyrinth can be found only by the few who deserve this, hence the lyrical voice regrets the mistakes of his youth:

‘A ja, co dalej, lepiej cień głęboki  
Błędów mych widzę, które gęsto jedzą  
Strwożone serce ustawiczną nędzą,  
I z płaczem ganię młodości mej skoki.’  
(Sonet I)

*‘Whilst I, onward, mark more the deep  
Shadow of my wrongs that prey untold  
On a heart cowed now by constant woe,  
And with tears, my youthful faults I rue.’*

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<sup>168</sup> Rybicka 23.

Although the path to the centre of the labyrinth (that is to God) is tortuous and leads to death, finally the human being leaves behind all that is deceptive and transitory and reaches for something real and eternal. Thus, human life is similar to the way through a labyrinth, that is, it leads from death to life, from humanity to deity. The aim of the metamorphosis is life's triumph by cheating death, by passing from one state of being to another.<sup>169</sup> Death becomes a path to rebirth and the real life, in the end this is the only way to leave the labyrinth. The symbol of the labyrinth is synonymous with infinity and the long journey of the soul, with the fluidity and dynamism of states of being: 'life-death-life'. The centre of the labyrinth implies a modification, it is a transformation from one state to another, from illusion to reality, from human bodiliness to spirituality.<sup>170</sup> Mircea Eliade claims that 'a *Centre* represents an ideal point which belongs not to profane geometrical space, but to sacred space; a point in which communication with Heaven or Hell may be realised: in other words, a *Centre* is a paradoxical 'place' where the planets intersect, the point at which the sensuous world can be transcended. But by transcending the Universe, one also transcends time and achieves *stasis* – the eternal non-temporal present'.<sup>171</sup> Elżbieta Rybicka states that the journey through the labyrinth is an *iter mysticum*, a road to perfection which can be obtained by the illumination in the centre, where the three spheres cross: heaven, earth and hell – the worlds of deity, the alive and the dead. The centre is synonymous with sacredness and immortality. Thus, 'the labyrinth's role is to shelter the centre which hides the treasure, the certain sense'.<sup>172</sup> For Sęp Szarzyński salvation is a goal and a reward for earthly wayfaring:

'(...) z żywiołów utworzone ciało  
To chwając, co zna początku równego,  
Zawodzi duszę, której wszystko mało,  
  
Gdy ciebie, wiecznej i prawej piękności  
Samej nie widzi – celu swej miłości.'  
(*Sonet V*)

'Aye, but 'tis flesh, from matter wrought,  
Praising what knows like inception,  
Guiles the soul, for which all's little

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<sup>169</sup> Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, trans. Charles Ruas (London: New York: Continuum, 2004) 89.

<sup>170</sup> Eliade quoted after Rybicka 16.

<sup>171</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols* (London: Harvill Press, 1961) 75.

<sup>172</sup> Rybicka 16.



*If Thee, Beauty real and e'erlasting,  
It sees not, its love's true object.'*

‘Przy twych Dekretach prawda z pobożnością,  
Zawsze przebywa (...)

Przeto ich w sercu swym sługa twój, Panie,  
Słusznie pilnować nigdy nie ustanie,  
Wiedząc nagrodę, którąś ty zgotował  
Każdemu, stale kto ich będzie chował.'  
(Pieśń I Pr)

*'In Thine Edicts, guarding them heedfully,  
Truth and piety all times abide; (...)*

*'Tis why, in his heart, Lord, Thy servant  
Shall ne'er cease minding them duly,  
Knowing the reward Thou hast readied  
For each who would keep them always.'*

When the goal of human existence is already formulated, the question is what is the Ariadne's thread which leads to that goal? If the world is a labyrinth, there must be a thread that Sęp Szarzyński in his poems tries to find, something that leads from chaos to harmony and order. The following two fragments are instructive in this respect:

‘Lecz błędy wszystkie, kto swe wiedzieć może?  
Ty mię sam oczyść, wiekuisty Boże,  
I wniwecz obróć moje wszystkie złości,  
Ktoremim zmażan prócz mej wiadomości.’  
(Pieśń I Pr)

*'Yet who is it marks all his failings?  
O God forever, cleanse me Thyself.  
Do away with my sundry misdeeds  
Whence unknowingly I am sullied.'*

‘Twą łaską wolny, Pomocą twą nogi  
Moje nie zstąpią z twojej świętej drogi,  
Dokąd duchowi mojemu mieszkanie  
W tym wątłym ciele będzie, o mój Panie!’  
(Pieśń III Pr)

*'Sacrifice. With Thine aid, my feet  
Shall stray not from Thy sacred path,  
For such time as my spirit's abode  
In this frail body be, O my Lord!'*

From the above excerpts we may understand that God's grace like an Ariadne's thread leads to salvation. The Decalogue shows humans the way and helps to find the centre of the labyrinth, the light of God. The human being needs God's help to follow His path. Reason cannot understand all sins and the lyrical voice begs for purifying grace from above. Only God's grace releases the human being from all temptations and makes mankind free. But there is another fold in the maze, the fold within the human being. Between these two folds, the double infinity, a tension between *God's grace and human nature* appears. Mankind's nature is sinful, contaminated by sin and consequently the human being lost in the labyrinth is too weak and blind to find a way out. The human being's soul wants to follow the light, but the human being is exposed to earthly desires. The drama of human existence lies in the fact that whatever choice is made, it always leads to a dead end. The individual is suspended between good and evil – the beauty of the cosmos is evident and proves Divine Mercy but, on the other hand, the sins of humans cannot be erased. Hence, humans need the capacity to love and the strength to reject temptations. The 'rusty heart' refuses the Lord's grace and God needs to give Himself to humankind. They need God's grace to be bestowed on them:

'Uskrom choć różgą swoją ciało zaślepione  
I żądzą próżną, sprosłą, szkodną napelnione.'

(Pieśń V Pr)

*'With Thy rod, do but quell the blind flesh  
So laden with vain, lowly, ill-working lust.'*

'A tak nas karzesz, gdyć który przewini,  
Że w nim pożytek twa święta kaźń czyni.'

(Pieśń I Pr)

*'Thou so dost punish should one offend,  
That in him Thy sacred suffering works gain.'*

'(...) i sprawiedliwego  
Ciężaru gwałt uskromisz z miłosierdzia twego.'

(Pieśń VI Pr)

*'(...) and in Thy just  
Compassion, alleve the burden's force.'*

The body loves only earthly pleasures, it is full of greed and blindness, thus the human being cannot love God. The body needs flogging ('uskrom różgą') and

violence ('gwałt') which reveal the defective senses. The lash of love is necessary. Punishment from God has a positive meaning in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry – it is the only way to fight sinful human nature. To be punished signifies being a step closer to salvation, hence there is an advantage for humans if God penalises instead of being silent.

'Ty nas oczyść, prosimy; Miłosierdzia twego  
Niech promień, bijąc w serce, odnosi od niego  
Ku tobie jasny odraz chwały i miłości ,  
O Panie, nasza chwała, nasza szczęśliwości!'

*(Pieśń I)*

'Make us clean, we beg Thee! From Thy mercy  
*Would that a beam, piercing our hearts, carry back*  
*Unto Thee clear reflection of praise and love,*  
*O Lord, our Praise, our Contentment!'*

Once again in this poem Sęp Szarzyński uses the apostrophe 'purify' ('oczyść'). The human being cannot erase his/her sins, God's love and grace are necessary to purge the heart of errors and 'heavy shadows'. All three phrases referring to expected acts of God ('uskrom różgą', 'bijąc w serce', 'wniwecz obróć') carry the meaning of dynamic and violent reaction: 'to restrain' and 'to hit', 'to wreck'. God's mercy strikes the human heart and in return it 'blows the rebound' ('odraz') of glory and love. The human rebound is the reflection of God's strike. They both originate from and return to the same source – God.<sup>173</sup> Anna Grudzień also draws attention to the word 'odraz', which in Polish has a slightly different meaning to the word 'rebound'. The prefix 'od' ('re') implies the reversal of the effect of the action and 'raz' (*knock*) expresses the violence of a returned, sudden blow. The power of painful blows, when reflected by a submissive heart, is able to change affliction into love. Although the lyrical voice willingly expresses submission to God, simultaneously another fold in the human nature is evident. The submissive attitude to God is accompanied by Sęp Szarzyński's defensive attitude to the world: his way through the labyrinth excludes submission to suffering, he decides to fight with 'Satan, world and flesh'. Anna Grudzień states that the image of the fight by the suffering human being, which is rooted in the Bible,

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<sup>173</sup> Grudzień 205.

may come from Erasmus' influence on Sęp Szarzyński; however, there is no evidence of this.<sup>174</sup>

‘Pokój – szczęśliwość, ale **bojowanie**  
Byt nasz podniebny.’

(*Sonet IV*)

*‘Peace be bliss, yet battle's strife  
'Tis our worldly run.’*

The aliteration of two words ‘**bojowanie** – **byt**’ identifies life with a fight just as in *Sonet V* life (‘**byt**’) is identified with course (‘**bieg**’). Thus, the human being is not a victim of his pain but a soldier, a Christian warrior ready to demonstrate human dignity. In this difficult struggle, God is a helper and a fortress. Although the human being in Sęp Szarzyński’s poems is ready for the battle, he does not rebel when he has the alternative choice of submitting to God’s will.

‘A jam drzewo jak Oliwy,  
W ogrodzie Pańskim wszczepiony,  
Kwitnąć będę, nielekliwy.  
W nadzieję z nieba obrony.

A ciebie przed wszemi, Panie,  
Wyznam skażcą nieprawości,  
I mając w tobie ufanie,  
Zniosę wszelkie doległości.’  
(*Pieśń II Pr*)

*‘But I, like unto an Olive tree  
Grafted in the Lord's garden,  
Unfearing I'll blossom forth  
In my hope of heaven's defence.*

*And unto everyone, Lord, Thee  
Would I claim iniquity's slayer;  
And having in Thee my trust,  
All manner of afflictions I'll bear.’*

‘Twemi ja, Panie, będąc upewniony  
Obietnicami, ani zaślepionej  
Ludzkiej chytrłości, ani groźby srogiej  
Bać się nie będę, ni wojennej trwogi.’  
(*Pieśń III Pr*)

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<sup>174</sup> Grudzień 204.

*'Whilst I, Lord, being assured  
In Thy promises, neither blind  
Human connivance, nor fierce threat,  
Nor battle's dread would I fear.'*

In this poem, faith triumphs over pain and hope soothes fear. God brings consolation and provides a shield against the world. God heals the wounds of human nature caused by original sin and moral transgression against Him by every individual. His grace is bestowed particularly on sinners and sufferers. God by his grace 'sam się dawa wszystkim lutościwie' (*[Him]self in mercy [He] givst all*) and shelters the human being from himself or herself. On the one hand, God is distant and inconceivable but on the other, the poetic voice rests his hopes in the Lord only; another antinomy lies in the image of humankind – existence is valueless but humans cannot surrender to death, they have to fight. Moreover, the world is so sinful and the human being is not worth God's attention but paradoxically genesis, original sin and redemption are the necessary factors to realize God's divinity. God deserves admiration, but the love which is reflected in that admiration should originate from Himself:

*'O Święty Panie, daj, niech i my mamy  
To, co mieć każesz, i Tobie oddamy!'  
(Sonet II)*

*'Grant, holy Lord, but that we too had  
What Thou bidst, and to Thee give it back!'*

God needs and demands the love of mankind but human beings do not have the ability to love. The love given by God can be finally returned to Him. There is no exit from the interdependence between human nature and God's grace. This impasse exemplifies the fold that comes into being in the individual's interior.

Another conflict arises between *the intellect and love*. There are two ways of cognition in the labyrinthine interior of the human being – reason and the heart. The cognition of God does not happen in the human brain, it is a knowledge that can be gained only by the heart. But the heart of the individual is contaminated by sin and, as mentioned above, humankind does not have a gift of love. Hence, the recognition of God is impracticable. Sęp Szarzyński follows St. Augustine's teachings on illumination and claims that the wisdom and love should be given to us by God

Himself. The human being possesses only imperfect senses which are insufficient to know the essence of God:

‘A my, na twoje sprawy choć wzrok ciemny mamy,  
Kiedy sie poznać chcemy, dotknąć sie władamy:  
Żeś nam nie tylko być dał, ale, by szczęśliwie  
Każdy żył, sam się dawasz wszystkim lutościwie.’  
(*Pieśń I*)

*‘And we, tho our vision be dark to Thy ways,  
May attain, would we wish to know:  
Not mere being hast Thou given us, but so each  
In joy might live, Thyself in mercy Thou givst all.’*

‘Daleś sie poznać: daj, niech serce pali,  
Co rozum chwali.’  
(*Pieśń III*)

*‘Thou gavst knowledge, let then the heart glow  
With what reason extols!’*

‘To know’ and ‘to see’ do not signify ‘to recognise’ in this poetry. The lyrical subject can see but cannot understand. The knowledge accessible to the human being is superficial and neither reason nor the senses comprise the essence of being. Mankind is not invested with the capacity for recognition, thus questions regarding a right choice are a component part of human nature. The poetic subject pleads for the glowing heart which, according to Sęp Szarzyński, provides true knowledge of God.

Providence helps but does not replace people in making decisions.<sup>175</sup> Here the problem of *freedom and choice* appears. Freedom in Sęp Szarzyński’s poems is equivalent to wandering and erring. The individual feels lost and, by making wrong choices, recedes from God:

‘Proch podnóżka twojego – czemu wolność mamy  
Twych ustaw ustępować, w których żywot znamy,  
Do tego przystępując, co śmiertelnie szkodzi?  
Daleś rozum – przecz u nas fortuna sie rodzi?’  
(*Pieśń II*)

*‘Dust of Thy footstool, why have we freedom  
To abandon Thy statutes, wherein life we’d know,*

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<sup>175</sup> Czesław Hernas, *Barok* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1998) 35.

*Proceeding to what commits mortal offence?  
Thou gavst reason - why's fortune bom unto us?'*

‘Bóg nas, Bóg rządzi.  
Nasze staranie  
Zawsze zabłądzi,  
Gdy nie chce na nie  
Wejrzeć łaskawie.  
Porzućmy dumy!  
Szaleństwo prawe  
Ludzkie rozumy!’  
(O tymże epigramma abo napis krótki)

*'This God rules us, God!  
Our each effort  
Shall all times err  
Should He refuse  
To see it kindly.  
Away with pride  
Madness indeed,  
The human mind!'*  
(An Epigram on the Same, or a Short  
Inscription)

Human beings are enslaved by the freedom given to them (‘Czemu wolność mamy?’). They cannot love God because freedom leads them astray (‘Nasze staranie zawsze zabłądzi’). The lyrical subject wants to escape from the body and temptations and begs God for subjugation. Freedom and Fortune cause the downfall of the human being’s soul, hence the individual commits mortal sins following the rules designated by reason. Freedom is a crime against God’s commandments. Sęp Szarzyński consequently pleads for a divine enslavement, for shackles sent from Heaven<sup>176</sup> which can protect him against himself, his errors and impiety:

‘Porzuć straszne pioruny, zatrać i przygody,  
Którymi nam znać dawasz, że chcesz z nami zgody,  
A utwierdź wolność chceniu, której nie zna użyć:  
Wolim w świętej ojczyźnie tobie wiecznie służyć.’  
(Pieśń II)

*'Away with awesome thunder, remove all toils  
That inform us 'tis our harmony Thou seekest;  
And firm our free will whose use we know not:  
Serving Thee in sacred homeland we'd forever prefer.'*

‘A daj, by pychy tobie brzydkiej siła  
Do serca mego nigdy nie wchodziła;

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<sup>176</sup> Mrowcewicz, *Czemu* 270.

Tak mię na wieki, prócz trudności wszelkiej.  
Oków pozbawisz bezbożności wielkiej.  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

*'And grant pride's force, hideous  
To Thee, would enter not in my heart.  
So wouldst Thou forever, with no travail,  
Cast off the fetters of my great impiety.'*

'Pioruny' (*thunders*) i 'przygody' (*accidents*), similarly to the storm and flood mentioned above are caused by Fortune and are symbols of the mutability of worldly life. Reason ought to shatter the illusions but puts the human being even deeper into the labyrinth instead. The long route to knowledge denotes the struggle to overcome desires and weakness. During this journey, the human being realizes how small and worthless he or she is ('proch podnózka Twego' – *Dust of Thy footstool*) how the human being's free will errs and betrays God's will ('I wola ma, twej wolej sługa nieskwirliwa (...)') – *And my will, to Thy will no whining slave* – *Pieśń VI Pr*). Only the comprehension of his/her position allows submission to God's will in the end; hence many times, the apostrophe to the Lord is situated in the final lines of the poems.<sup>177</sup> All requests sent to God are without signs of doubt or impatience. There is no implication of the exact time when the desired change of Fortune is going to happen. Sęp Szarzyński's prayers contain a space which is necessary for fulfilment. He asks God to control Fortune, but when this happens, it is determined by God's will and choice.<sup>178</sup> Waiting is an immanent part of human existence. Even if the waiting is filled with fighting and movement, there is no sense of urgency emerging from these lines ('Ty mnie przy sobie postaw, a przespiecznie/Będę wojował i wygram statecznie' – *Set me by Thy side, and I shall in safety/Fight and in steadfastness prevail*).

The lack of belief in knowledge gained by the mind supports the meaning of the labyrinth as logically organised but paradoxically impervious to control by reason. Reason must be connected with God's grace to lead the human being to the centre. George Herbert presents a similar philosophy of life in the poem *Pearl*:

*'Yet through these labyrinths, not my groveling wit,  
But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,*

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<sup>177</sup> See for instance: *Sonet II, Sonet IV, Pieśń I, Pieśń II*.

<sup>178</sup> Grudzień 224.



Did both conduct and teach me, how by it  
To climbe to thee.<sup>179</sup>

The lyrical subject of this poem accentuates the submissive condition of human reason ('groveling wit') and pleads for grace which, in the form of the silk twist, will conduct the individual through the labyrinths and teach him or her how to love God and attain His Kingdom. Both poets emphasise the imperfection of 'wit' but simultaneously do not underestimate reason's role in the process of recognition. While Herbert states: 'Did both conduct and teach me', Sęp Szarzyński writes in *Pieśń VIII*: 'Komu Pan Bóg dał rozum, zawżdy jest swobodny' (*E'er free of it's he whom Lord God gave reason*). Hence, reason is necessary to realise that the fight against the world is possible only with the support of God's grace. Grace is a factor that may bring to the sensible human a real, true freedom.<sup>180</sup> The wandering through the labyrinth is connected with gaining the knowledge required to solve the riddle of confusing crossroads. Additionally, it demands the analysis of one's own state and finding the spiritual strength to escape the trap. In the labyrinth choice is a crucial point. The road of the immature soul leads finally to perfection, to its ultimate goal. Thus, the maturation that takes place inside the labyrinth is equivalent to the pursuit of knowledge and consciousness of self-deficiency. Knowledge is therefore essential in seeking the centre.<sup>181</sup>

The human being who reaches the centre finally discovers that the mystery is hidden within himself/herself. The individuals who enter the labyrinth duel with themselves and find that the reason for being in this labyrinth lies in their imperfect nature, while their choices become the sign of the tragic inconstancy and mutability of the world as well as the human being's existence in this world. Therefore the labyrinth is a way of gaining self-knowledge and self-identity while the dark, crooked paths symbolise obscure and misleading spheres of the human psyche. The knowledge of humans' labyrinthine nature is very profound in Sęp Szarzyński's

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<sup>179</sup> George Herbert, The Pearl. Matth. 13, in: *The English Poems of Georgie Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007) 222-223.

<sup>180</sup> Piotr Urbański, 'Mikołaja Sępa Szarzyńskiego poetycki traktat o naturze i łasce,' in: *Natura i łaska w poezji polskiego baroku: okres potrydencki: studia o tekstach* (Kielce: Szumacher 1996) 61.

<sup>181</sup> Mircea Eliade notes that: 'The labyrinth is sometimes conceived as a knot. The metaphysico-ritual unity to 'untie the knot' comprises the ideas of difficulty, of danger and death [...] On another level, that of knowledge and wisdom, one meets with similar expressions: people speak of 'deliverance' from illusions, they seek to 'tear away' the veils of unreality, to 'untie the knots' of existence etc. This gives one the impression that the situation of man in the world is always expressed by key-words conveying the ideas of 'bondage, shackling, attachment' etc'. Eliade 116-117.

poetry, leading Jan Błoński to describe it as ‘poetry of the interior’.<sup>182</sup> Space in Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry is subjective, seen through the lenses of the inner-self, it is shaped according to the poetic subject’s interior. The individual is enmeshed in his or her inner-self, thus space (the world) is shaped as chaotic, occasional, mysterious and unpredictable. Space is divided into many paths and wildernesses, where questers attempt to find sense.<sup>183</sup> The lyrical subject in Sęp Szarzyński’s poems suffers loneliness, feels alienated and thrust into a hostile space which cannot be deciphered. Space reflects one’s interior which is enigmatic and full of contradictions. The inner chaos reveals human weakness:

‘Cóż będę czynił w tak strasliwym boju,  
Wąty, niebaczny, rozdwojony w sobie?’  
(*Sonet IV*)

*‘Midst clash so feared, what’ll I do,  
Frail, unheeding, cleft within?’*

The poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński is a moving grievance for a soul’s dilemma, its complexity and the necessity of making moral choices. Paradoxically, the volume of *Rytmy* lacks in personal, inner expressions. The drama of existence is presented indirectly. The intimate confessions of the lyrical subject appear sporadically, for instance in *Sonet IV* cited above (‘cóż będę czynił?’) and in *Sonet I*:

‘A ja, co dalej, lepiej cień głęboki  
Błędów mych widzę, które gęsto jedzą  
Strwożone serce ustawiczną nędzą,  
I z płaczem ganie młodości mej skoki.’

*‘Whilst I, onward, mark more the deep  
Shadow of my wrongs that prey untold  
On a heart cowed now by constant woe,  
And with tears, my youthful faults I rue.’*

The lyrics of Sęp Szarzyński present the image of an individual who does not exist within society but is rather situated between the elements. Whether Sęp Szarzyński uses verbs in the first person or not, the poetry reflects the inner-self of the human being whose main characteristics are alienation and loneliness. All

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<sup>182</sup> Błoński 51.

<sup>183</sup> Rybicka 22.

mankind's dilemmas are filtered through personal experiences and emotions and take an subjective forms. The poetic voice is surrounded by the signs which describe his interior. The world becomes an emblem of the labyrinthine soul. In the Sęp Szarzyński's world there is no room for other human beings or things or colours; there are notions, signs and abstract ideas instead. Anna Grudzień argues that the abstract words so frequently used by Sęp Szarzyński help him to avoid suffering. The abstract words, images and symbols construct his poetic control and distance from suffering. On the other hand, Jan Błoński noted that Sęp Szarzyński perpetrates a 'spiritualization of the world', the outside world interferes with the inner world and therefore 'the outside' becomes a subject of the inner meditation.<sup>184</sup> In Sęp Szarzyński's poetry there is no boundary between the interior and the outer reality. The labyrinth of the world that the poetic voice can see is created by the inner-self; the labyrinth surrounds the human being as it is rooted within himself or herself.

Elżbieta Rybicka remarks that often in the labyrinth's representations there is a mirror situated in the centre. Kenosian adds that 'mirroring is consistant with the structural principle of the labyrinth in that spaces and paths appear to be identical, thereby confusing the quester'.<sup>185</sup> Gustav Rene Hocke considers the rising interest in the image of the looking-glass as a sign of mannerism. According to him, the painting by Il Parmiginino, *Self-portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1523) exemplifies the mannerist *concetto* and foreshadows modern art. 'The looking-glass was a confirmation of the recently experienced subjectivity. The infinity of reflections is a harbinger of the labyrinth of the absolute unreality'.<sup>186</sup> The looking-glass causes the splitting of 'the self' into many abstract notions. Hence, the truth is not a single one anymore but rather is folded into many different truths. The infinite mirror due to the movement of the sunbeam is a synonym of the labyrinth that represents the illusory nature of life. The looking-glass is identified with delusion, deception and appearance. The reflections are metaphors of the human being's restriction of knowledge/recognition and his/her imperfect senses. The world is a hall of mirrors, a mirror maze, which on the one hand creates illusions but on the other reveals to humans a truth about themselves. In the poetry of Szarzyński the world is full of

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<sup>184</sup> See: Błoński 51-67.

<sup>185</sup> Błoński 27.

<sup>186</sup> Błoński 14.

illusory beauty but the human being realizes his/her place in the universe when he or she examines him/herself in the 'mirror of God'.

'Bowień zwierciadła swej wiecznej mądrości  
Na niebie stworzył – szczyre Rozumności.'  
(*Pieśń III*)

*'Aye, in the heavens He's formed mirrors  
Of His eternal sagacity, the Wisdoms pure.'*

'Zwierciadła' is a designation of the 'pure wisdoms'<sup>187</sup> which intercept brightness from God and deliver it to the lower entities. The universe according to Sęp Szarzyński is a system of mirrors which focuses God's light and passes it on to other beings. God is identified with the bright light of the Sun. The brightness that He sends is reflected on each of the levels of the universe, which form the labyrinth of the reflections of God's looking-glass. However, with the gradation of levels, the reflected light is less perfect and bright. The light always originates from God and only perfect entities can radiate the light back to God. The light is a visualisation of mercy. Grace, like the Sun shines on everything but is reflected only by those who are polished and pure:

'Ale ta twa powszechna łaska, Panie wieczny,  
(By cień światła twojego – ten to blask słoneczny),  
Chociaj rzeczy oświeca jednako poddane,  
Same promieni czyste i polerowane.

O wszechmogący Boże, światłości szczęśliwa!  
Serca nasze osiadła rdza grzechów płaczliwa,  
Skąd, chociaż nas oświecasz, żywiemy jak w nocy,  
A jadu tego pozbyć - nie naszej czyn mocy.

Ty nas oczyść, prosimy; Miłosierdzia twego  
Niech promień, bijąc w serce, odnosi od niego  
Ku tobie jasny odraz chwały i miłości,  
O Panie, nasza chwała, nasza szczęśliwości!  
(*Pieśń I*)

*'Still, Lord eternal, this Thy grace universal  
(But a shadow to Thy light the sun's blaze),  
Tho all things subserving doth it equally light,  
But the pure and polished would it shine.*

*O God omnipotent, Light of Contentment!  
Sin's grievous rust hath lodged in our hearts*

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<sup>187</sup> Compare to *Sonet II*: 'Cherubs (wisdom's vast gulf)'.

*Whence, tho Thy light strike us, in night we abide;  
And to allay this venom is an act past our power.*

*Make us clean, we beg Thee! From Thy mercy  
Would that a beam, piercing our hearts, carry back  
Unto Thee clear reflection of praise and love,  
O Lord, our Praise, our Contentment!'*

God, light ('światłość', 'blask słoneczny', 'promienie', 'jasny odraz') and happiness are synonymous in this poem, while darkness and night depict the world of humankind. The mirrors of human beings' hearts are rusty due to the sins carried within. The defilement of sin means that the heart cannot reflect back the light. It needs to be purified by God's grace and consequently be able to return the light to God. The brightness is a symbol of eternal happiness, virtue and truth:

- '(...) stąd pała prawy  
Płomień (...) ' (*Sonet II*)

*'(...) flame  
Most true, in joyous love burn bright.'*

- 'W sobie chwalebnej, świętej, niezmierzonej  
Światłości (...) ' (*Sonet VI*)

*'Praised, sacred and boundless Itself,  
Whence every light's glow doth stem (...)'*

- 'Two obietnice odmiany nie znają  
i światłem prawdy serca utwierdzają;' (*Pieśń I Pr*)

*'No change do Thy promises know,  
And with truth's glow our hearts they affirm;'*

- 'I znaki jasne twojej życzliwości (...) ' (*Pieśń III Pr*)

*'And brights signs of Thy benevolence (...)'*

- '(...) Seraf, miłości prawej promień czysty (...) ' (*Pieśń VI Pr*)

*(...) Seraph, true love's pure brand (...) ' – literally 'pure beam'*

The light that comes back to its origin is a sign of infinity and eternal love with no beginning and no end. Plotinus (204/5 – 270 C.E.) employs the analogy of the Sun which emanates light indiscriminately without thereby diminishing itself, or the reflection in a mirror that does not diminish or otherwise alter the object being

reflected.<sup>188</sup> The metaphor of divine light is rooted in the Bible and it subsequently has a particular association with Baroque art. We can find the motif in the Jesuit emblem book, Bernini's *St Teresa*, Andreas Gryphius's *Morgen Sonnet* and Crashaw's *The Flaming Heart*.<sup>189</sup> The metaphor of the luminous circle appears in the Vaughan's poem *The World* ('I SAW Eternity the other night, Like a great ring of pure and endless light, All calm, as it was bright;').<sup>190</sup> His poem *Midnight* is likewise based on the symbolics (imagery) of light.<sup>191</sup> However, it is worth noting that in Sęp Szarzyński's oeuvre the image of light is dialectical. While the glare of God is holy, the flames that burn the lyrical subject of the *Erotics* have a different meaning. 'Płomienie wściekle' (*raging flames*), 'piekielne ciężkości' (*hellish heaviness*), 'srogi płomień' (*severe flame*), 'ogień' (*fire*) are tools to describe the love of miserably infatuated humans. The dialectics of fire is strongly accentuated in *Nagrobek jednej pannie*. The illness burns the human being with fire ('Płomienie febry ciężkiej, które go paliły') and God's flame without heat ('ogień zrzędzony') that comes like rain, washes and rescues the heart. The flame from God takes the form of the purifying mercy, the wordly flame on the contrary, burns and devastates. Gaston Bachelard in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* observes: 'like all the dialectics based on perception that we find at the root of dialectical sublimation, the idealization of fire through light rests on the phenomenal contradiction: sometimes fire shines without burning; then its value is all purity'.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> 'The Four Principles and Neo-Platonic Philosophy,'

<http://engforum.pravda.ru/showthread.php?231698-Plotinus-and-the-Trinity-of-God>, 11. 05. 2010.

<sup>189</sup> Grudzień 2005.

<sup>190</sup> Henry Vaughan, *The World*, <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/vaughan/world.htm>, 04. 06. 2010.

<sup>191</sup> 'Thy heav'ns, some say,  
Are a fiery-liquid light,  
Which mingling aye  
Streams, and flames thus to the sight.  
Come then, my God !  
Shine on this blood  
And water, in one beam;  
And Thou shalt see  
Kindled by Thee  
Both liquors burn, and stream.  
O what bright quickness,  
Active brightness,  
And celestial flows,  
Will follow after  
On that water,  
Which Thy Spirit blows!', <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/vaughan/ssmidnight.htm>, 06. 04. 2011

<sup>192</sup> Bachelard also quotes Novalis: 'Light is an essence of the igneous phenomenon. Light is not only a symbol but an agent of purity. In infinite space light (...) awaits the soul. It is then the basis for

In the *Sonet III* the portent of 'The Sun – Christ' is Mary, the Mother of God, who is compared to the 'true moon', a symbol of mercy. Mary is the mirror that precedes the light of Christ:

'Tyś jest dusz naszych jak Księżyc prawdziwy,  
W którym wiecznego baczymy promienie  
Miłosierdzia, gdy na nas grzech straszliwy  
Przywodzi smutnej nocy ciężkie cienie!

Ale [Ty] zorzą już nam nastań rań.  
Pokaż twego Słońca światłość żadaną.'

*'To our souls Thou seemst a true Moon,  
Whence a beam we mark of endless  
Mercy, as vile sin bears on us  
Sorry night's ponderous shadows!*

*But upward, our Dawn's Morn, arise,  
Thy Sun's craved light to disclose!'*

The world sinks into darkness but Mother Mary brightens human hearts. She portends the dawn and coming of God's Son, the purest and brightest light. The mirror images appear also in *Sonet VI* which is dedicated to Sęp Szarzyński's patron, Mikołaj Tomicki. Magdalena Kay remarks that this is a rare instance of direct personal allusion by Sęp Szarzyński, wherein he discusses the role of poetry as devotion. The poet lights a lamp to the source of all light. The effort is not in vain because it serves the purpose of private devotion and public praise. God's spiritual light is paralleled by the earthly light of Tomicki's virtue: it has 'enlightened' all. A rough analogy may also be formed between the words 'święty' (*holy*) and 'świeci' (*illuminates*)<sup>193</sup>:

'Tomicki, jeśli nie ganią owego,  
Który ku chwale świeci lampą onej  
W sobie chwalebnej, świętej, niezmierzonej  
Światłości, światła skąd jasność każdego (...)  
(*Sonet VI*)

*'Tomicki, if they'd not chide him  
Who lights a praising lamp to Light  
Praised, sacred and boundless Itself,  
Whence every light's glow doth stem (...)'*

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spiritual illumination'. Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1964) 106-107.

<sup>193</sup> Kay, *The Metaphysical*, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/09-2/kaysep.html>, 19. 03. 2011.

Tomicki who lights a lamp for the love and glory of God, partially gives back the light received from Lord. The light of the lamp is only a symbol of the immeasurable brightness.

Louis of Granada, a Dominican theologian and writer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whose works were familiar to Sęp Szarzyński, distinguishes two different kinds of light: 'As the sun is the source and the reason of the entire light in the world and thanks to it we can see what we see, You are the light invisible and the Sun for our reasons, from which origins the light in them all, thanks to what they understand, what they understand'.<sup>194</sup> God illuminates, leads the human being from the darkness of ignorance and incomprehension of what the blind senses cannot see. 'Brightness' in the poem is searching the divine flame within oneself. Virtue ('dzielność, stateczność, rozum, obyczaje') in Sęp Szarzyński's lyrics generates the warmth, it is like a lamp within the human being, a sign of seeking the holy light and escaping the darkness of sins. The labyrinth of mirrors and, consequently, the play between the light and the shadows is often used in painting. In Sęp Szarzyński's poetry there are no colours used to describe reality, the images are based on the interference of shadows and light. With regard to Baroque art Deleuze says: 'A whiteness is produced through all the tiny inner mirrors. It makes white, but shadow too (...) We have God on one side, who said let there be light, and with it the white-mirror, but on the other side the shadows of absolute blackness, made up of an infinity of holes that can no longer reflect the received rays'.<sup>195</sup> The production of light requires the shadow as its immanent component. The brightness and the darkness complement one another.<sup>196</sup>

The earth in Sęp Szarzyński's works is depicted as immersed in shadows. The human being having dimmed senses is oppressed by 'the deep shadows of errors' and lives in a 'dark night dressed in a dark mist' surrounded by 'heavy shadows'. The juxtaposition of images of shadows and sun is a means to designate a space within this poetry. The labyrinth is associated with darkness and seeking the light. The place that lacks the sunbeam is the abyss of the night. The human being is situated between

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<sup>194</sup> Quoted after Grześkowiak, Karpinski and Mrowcewicz 149.

<sup>195</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold* 32.

<sup>196</sup> Anna Grudzień writes about the association of these images with the Bible. Shadows denoting the transience of life can be found in *Psalms* 102:11 (days which 'are like a shadow that declineth'), as well as in *Psalms* 144:4, *Job* 8:9, 14:2, *1 Chron.* 29:15, *Eccles.* 6:12. Darkness is associated with evil and affliction in *Psalms* 143:3, *John* 1:5. Through the Bible the symbol of the shadow became a part of European culture. Some examples can be found in England (Shakespeare), Spain (Calderon), the Netherlands (Erasmus of Rotterdam) and Poland (Naborowski). Grudzień 173.



the shadows of 'earthly pleasures' and the light of God, between illusions and truth. The human being cannot exist without the Sun (God), 'ginie od słońca jak cień opuszczony' (*A shadow void of Sun, he dies*). The human being cannot exist without the light of God just as the sun is indispensable to a shadow. Shadow and light are inseparable in the fold. When matter is folded, one part is always illuminated while the other one is shaded. Thus, a shadow is not opposed to the light, on the contrary there is an inseparable relation between them. Sęp Szarzyński comprehends this dependence using the oxymoronic metaphor of a shadow without the sun to illustrate an abandonment which exceeds the limit of comprehension. Moreover, this metaphor signifies not only loneliness and desertion but also the coldness of a place devoid of the sun. As mentioned above, shadows are also symbols of illusions ('O, stokroć szczęśliwy,/który tych cieniów w czas zna kształt prawdziwy!' – *O blissful a hundredfold/Who knows quick these shadows' true shape!, Sonet I*). As the shadow does not possess shape, the recognition of truth is impossible – the shadow (illusion that attracts the senses) does not contain the element of truth.

The outer world where the human being exists is full of deceptive shadows, illusions and reflections. Space is formed in a similar way to the labyrinth where the paths cross and one resembles another. The road to the centre of the labyrinth is obstructed by temptations. The individual cannot recognize the truth because his/her interior is folded in the shape of outer space. One imitates the other. Hence, the human being finds himself/herself constantly in the labyrinth and unable to break the deadlock.

In the poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński, as I have tried to show, the knot of existence remains untied.

### *3.4 Language as a Labyrinth*

Similarly to the idea of movement, the motif of the labyrinth in Sęp Szarzyński's poetry can be found on many different levels, also in its stylistic matter – the versification, rhetoric, and organisation of the text itself. The equivalent to labyrinthine soul is 'labyrinthine language' – full of gaps, devoid of coherence, which attempts to force the reader to seek the hidden meanings and relations between words. The language reflects and simultaneously reinforces the labyrinth of the world and self-interior. Distrust in the human being harmonises with a lack of confidence in naming things and emotions. Thus, the lyrical subject doubts, errs, hunts and expresses his uncertainty, for example:

'Dzielność, stateczność, rozum, obyczaje  
Twoje, co zacność (choć wielką) przechodzą,

Wiersza mojego ustawną zabawą  
Będą. Co mówię? będą sławą prawą.<sup>197</sup>

(*Sonet VI*)

The language which describes a labyrinthine reality cannot be clear; there is no possibility of easy communication in that space. Through the labyrinthine soul, the rhetoric of darkness speaks out. Sęp Szarzyński 'encodes' the poetic space in his works, the rhetoric is conceptual – it only suggests the hidden meaning but the final interpretation belongs to the reader. Thus, the reader errs between the verses of the poems, he or she must read upwards or downwards:

'A chciwa może odciąć rozkosz nędzą  
Śmierć – tuż za nami spore czyni kroki!

(*Sonet I*)

The subject of the sentence ('śmierć') is moved to the beginning and connects with two verbs ('może' and 'czyni'). Hence, the reading cannot be horizontal but it goes vertically – downwards, then from left to right and upwards and then from right to left.

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<sup>197</sup> I do not provide the translations of the poems in this chapter as English versions do not always reflect the poetic structures of the originals.

The opposite example, when the one predicate belongs to more than one subject is illustrated by this verse:

‘Niebo koroną, mężnym ojczyzna go zowie (...)  
(*Na obraz Stefana Batorego...*)

The subject and verb occur in the end of the sentence, thus the reader reads from right to left: ‘Ojczyzna go zowie mężnym, a niebo koroną’. The **elliptical constructions** generate a multiplicity of meanings which reflects the ambiguity of the world. They show the difficulty of deciphering phenomena of the universe and the labyrinthine interior of the human being and they reflect the peculiar perception of space. Ambiguity is one of the main characteristics of Sęp Szarzyński’s poetry:

‘I tu, dokąd Bug cichy wody swoje  
Niesie do Wisły, dotąd imię twoje

Trwać będzie w ustach ludu Rycerskiego(...)  
(*Pieśń V*)

This fragment forces the reader to reconstruct the syntactical relationship between the words and discover the meaning of the word ‘dokąd’. It follows the adverbial pronoun ‘tu’ and initially suggests location but after a second reading we realize that there is a connection between ‘dokąd’ and ‘dotąd’ which gives a temporal meaning to the sentence<sup>198</sup>. The ellipsis appears for example in the *Epitafium Rzymowi*:

‘Ty, co Rzym wpośród Rzyma chcąc baczyć, pielgrzymie.’

The pronoun ‘ty’ refers to the noun in the vocative case – ‘pielgrzymie’ which together create the apostrophe to the human being: ‘You, pilgrim’. Additionally, the parallelism of the word ‘Rzym’, repeated twice and moreover, hidden in the word ‘pielgrzym’ cause an illusion of diversity and multiplicity of meaning.

The object used in the infinitive performs a similar function:

‘Upaść na wieki żądać nie przestanie.’  
(*Sonet IV*)

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<sup>198</sup> Wyderka 191.

There are two infinitives in this verse: ‘upaść’ and ‘żądać’ while only the latter is the predicate. Moreover, Sęp Szarzyński often uses the instrumental of means instead of the more standard structure with a preposition. We can find an example in *Nagrobek M. Starzechowskiemu*:

‘Leży, już zwiędły gwałtem, a nie latki.’

The opposite of the elliptical constructions are **asyndetons**. Enumeration of words, the strings of unconnected words, and constant repetitions of selected words and phrases indicate a disdain for earthly goods:

‘Sława smaczna, rozkoszy, władza, siła złota (...)’ – (*Pieśń IX*)

‘O moc, o rozkosz, o skarby, pilności (...)’ – (*Sonet I*)

The asyndeton reflects a disrespect of ‘temporal things’ – their constancy does not last any longer than the time necessary to read this enumeration. This rhetorical device does not only have the effect of speeding up the rhythm of a passage, but additionally possesses an evaluative capacity. A similar role is performed by **epithets**, which classify, describe and evaluate objects or phenomena:

‘Narodzie, głupią mądrością chłubliwy  
I błędem zmyślnym wierzyć uporczywy (...)’ (*Pieśń I Pr*)

‘Panie nasz wszechmogący, wieczny, niepojęty,  
Tobie Cheruby krzyczą „Święty, święty, święty”!’ (*Pieśń VI Pr*)

The accumulation of epithets indicates that the author is searching for the proper words to describe the surrounding world. Sometimes these epithets contain contradictions, for example ‘głupia mądrość’ is an oxymoron which not only defines but also adds a pejorative meaning to the word ‘mądrość’. The contradictory or distant associations bear testimony to the inner drama of the poetic voice. The rhetoric that form the poetic space in the shape of the labyrinth reflect the condition of the lyrical subject but simultaneously put the reader in to this labyrinth – he or she participates in the perplexity of the poetry, trying to find its hidden senses. **Inversion**

could also be counted among the labyrinthine devices as it stresses the reversal of the standard order of words:

‘(...) I tak pierzchliwego  
Śmierci grzbiet jest odkryt, jak piersi śmiałego.’  
(*Pieśń VI*)

In the Polish language the usage of this rhetorical device is even stronger than in English because of the grammatical gender – words ‘pierzchliwego’ and ‘grzbiet’ represent the masculine gender while the word ‘śmierć’ is feminine. Additionally, there is another ellipsis – the omission of the word ‘człowiek’ to which both adjectives refer: ‘pierzchliwy’ and ‘śmiały’. Consequently the effect of confronting the masculine adjective with the feminine noun gives a surprising and unusual phrase: ‘pierzchliwego śmierci’. When the reader reads the sentence once, he or she finds himself/herself in a blind alley. The reader first errs in order to discover the true meaning eventually.

Another method used to create the labyrinthine space within the text is **anacoluthon** - an abrupt change within a sentence from one syntactic structure to another:

‘Do kresu swego nic nie zmordowany  
Gwałtem sie wali; dobrze przyrównany  
Kształtem i siłą i pędem onemu  
Jest olbrzymowi, sto rąk mającemu.’  
(*Pieśń I Pr*)

This fragment contains not only the anacoluthon which is visible in the participial structure but also an inversion (Sęp Szarzyński splits the words that consist of the passive form of ‘jest przyrównany’), and an asyndeton (‘kształtem i siłą, i pędem’). Hence, there emerges an impression that the author does not have control of the text, he repeats himself and as it were forages around instead. Insecurity and doubts are also reflected in the lyrical space, in the form of obscure metaphors, for example: ‘kształt cieniów’, ‘rdza grzechów płaczliwa’ or such oxymorons as: ‘zgodne spory’, ‘trup szczęścia’. The dilemmas of the poetic voice influence the syntax of the utterances, hence the numerous conditional statements and expressions of consent, presented as questions, interjections, fragmentary utterances and exclamations.<sup>199</sup> Sęp Szarzyński’s ‘grammar of

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<sup>199</sup> Wyderka 105.

uncertainty' uses **epanorthosis** which signifies immediate and emphatic self-correction (as mentioned above):

‘(...) wiersza mojego ustawną zabawą  
Będą. Co mówię? będą sławą prawą.’  
(*Sonet VI*)

The lyrical subject searches for the adequate word, stammers and hesitates. Finally he expresses praise. Hesitation and quandary are also noted by **anadiplosis** - the repetition of the last word of a preceding clause:

‘A straszny tyran sam strach, hańbę, szkodę czuje.  
Strach, hańbę, szkodę czuje(...)’  
(*Pieśń VII*)

Anadiplosis is one of the figures of speech that shows ‘rozdwójenie w sobie’ (self- dichotomization). The pain of indecision of the poetic voice corresponds to an ambiguity of notions and sense of words. **Metonymy** involves the substitution of one word for another, based on contiguity. Metonymy takes the form of:

- **diaphora** (repetition of similar or same words with different meaning in order to emphasise an onomatopoeic effect):  
‘Światłości, światła skąd jasność każdego (...)’ – (*Sonet VI*)
- **paronomasia** (usage of similar words having a different meaning):  
‘(...) gdy nam możność niewdzięczna część i część wydziera (...)’ – (*Pieśń VI Pr*)
- **antanaclasis** (repetition of homonyms): rhyme ‘chory – chory’ (ill – choir) in *Sonet III*.

Sometimes Sęp Szarzyński uses contradiction to emphasise similarity (the palindrome ‘mur – rum’) to illustrate the paradoxes of the world. There is no easy exit from this labyrinthine space, the reader must ‘collaborate’ with the poetic voice and take part in the journey that leads to the revelation of the hidden meaning. Furthermore, the form of the sonnet follows a strict and ‘closed’ structure. Paradoxically, the ‘content’ of Sęp Szarzyński’s poems seem to exceed the limits of

its rigorous form because the questions posed in his work remain without answers. The problems remain unresolved.

The rhetoric devices which I have just listed are used to express the complexity of the world and humankind's condition. The motif of the labyrinth being a particular type of *the fold* allowed me to illustrate the relationship and the inseparability of contradictions in Sęp Szarzyński's verses. They do not exist separately, on the contrary they form a scheme 'X *and* Z' rather than 'X *against (as opposed to)* Z'. The multiplicity of choices that the poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński offers, invites the reader to decipher this labyrinth – the labyrinth of the world, the human being and the poetic language. The infinite fold.

## *Conclusion*

Gilles Deleuze in his study *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (originally published in 1988) examines Leibniz's philosophy in order to establish the main characteristics of the Baroque era. Its findings allow him to create the concept of the *Baroque House* which encompasses many aspects of Baroque arts and science. Deleuze collected and analysed the fundamental principles of 17<sup>th</sup>-century thought through a close reading of Leibniz from the perspective of contemporary philosophy.

I have selected two primary notions – those of the *fold* and *two floors* – from Deleuze's work and have applied them to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Polish poet, Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński. His verse, rediscovered two hundred years after his death, has presented a challenge to many scholars, who have tried to classify his poetry but have invariably instead pigeonholed it. In recent years several attempts to offer a new interpretation have been made by English speaking scholars such as Ann Komaromi and Alyssa Dinega Gillespie. Their findings reveal that Sęp Szarzyński's oeuvre still represents a rich and multi-layered phenomenon open to new readings. Deleuze's concept of the *fold* has never before been applied to the poetry of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century writer and yet the similarity between this notion and the poetic imagination of Sęp Szarzyński has struck me as a highly revealing affinity. Therefore, in this study, I have argued that Sęp Szarzyński who lived over four centuries ago, created work of such mysterious depth and complexity that corresponds with ease to analytical tools found in contemporary philosophical thought.

Applying the notion of the *fold* to selected poetic works has had a triple impact. Firstly, by analysing the poetry through the lenses of Baroque concepts, I have placed it within its literary history without periodisation or a rigid framework. This was possible by analysing the images in Sęp Szarzyński's oeuvre. The idea of movement, the division into *two floors* and the topos of the labyrinth (which permeate the whole space of Sęp Szarzyński's poems), have reinforced some of my earlier observations regarding the shared artistic principles between the poems in question and European Baroque art.



Secondly, the frequent references to early 17<sup>th</sup> century European tendencies have allowed me to situate Sęp Szarzyński in a wider context arguing that any comparison to Polish Renaissance poets limits, rather than opens up, new interpretative possibilities for this poetry. Consequently, I have analysed the motifs of death, Fortune and the labyrinth within the framework of their other European realisations, offering examples from Sęp Szarzyński's contemporaries (Góngora) and Baroque poets such as Gryphius, Herbert and Donne. What has emerged from this comparative reading is an image of Sęp Szarzyński's poetic universe in which a profound awareness of declining Renaissance harmony transforms into timeless metaphysical concerns.

Thirdly, Deleuze's philosophy, adapted for the needs of my methodology, has allowed me to see Sęp Szarzyński's verses in a new light. For a long time I had perceived the poet as a highly dualistic thinker, whose mind comprehended the surrounding world as being full of binary oppositions excluding one another. Deleuze's study has redefined my thinking and has challenged many of my previous assumptions. My findings have led me to acknowledge the poetry of Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński as having multiple possibilities of interpretation which are not mutually exclusive but complementary with regards to their spatial relations and contexts. Thus, for instance, the idea of movement (being the focus of Błoński's study) signifies more than just changes in existence. In fact, it determines the human position regarding God, death, and the self - only the acceptance of this permanent state of being in motion can lead to a comprehensive view of humanity. Hence, movement causes folds, which - as a result - appear between the cosmos and earth, between the body and soul and consequently within the human soul, exemplified by the topos of the labyrinth. The division into *two floors* illustrates how the *folds* interfere with, penetrate and complement one another; how the human being links all the contradictions within one life and within a single interior. The motif of the labyrinth demonstrates the complexity of the human condition. Sęp Szarzyński's sense of space in this respect is extraordinary. In his poetic world he created an alienated, abstract, colourless space, offering instead multiple dependencies between phenomena, concepts and ideas. Everything in this world seems to be in a state of perpetual aporia, a dynamic impasse which offers no simple answers or solutions leaving much space for infinite folds. Even the poetic form and syntax reflect this unusual rendering of space. The insecurity, hesitation and uncertainty of the lyrical

subject are embodied through poetic devices such as inversions, asyndetons, ellipses and other syntactic structures.

My methodological approach has allowed me to present Sęp Szarzyński's poetry through the prism of various spatial relations and their mutual dependencies on many different levels. Space is crucial for the images which the poet employs in his works. It becomes the key concept for interpreting his poetic vision. As in Joan Miró's paintings, the concept of space with movement at its centre is an essence, a tool to express emotions and create an individual artistic world in which the reader/viewer discovers multiple interpretative possibilities. I intentionally make this comparison to the 20<sup>th</sup> -century painter in order to illustrate my use of the *fold* as introduced by the 20<sup>th</sup> -century philosopher, Deleuze. The fact that I can make this comparison confirms that the way in which Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński creates his poetic space surpasses not only his own contemporaries but also the many methodological frameworks that have been applied to his work so far. It acknowledges Sęp Szarzyński's profound poetic vision which transcends his own epoch and secures him a unique place among the world-renowned poetic masters of European literature.

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